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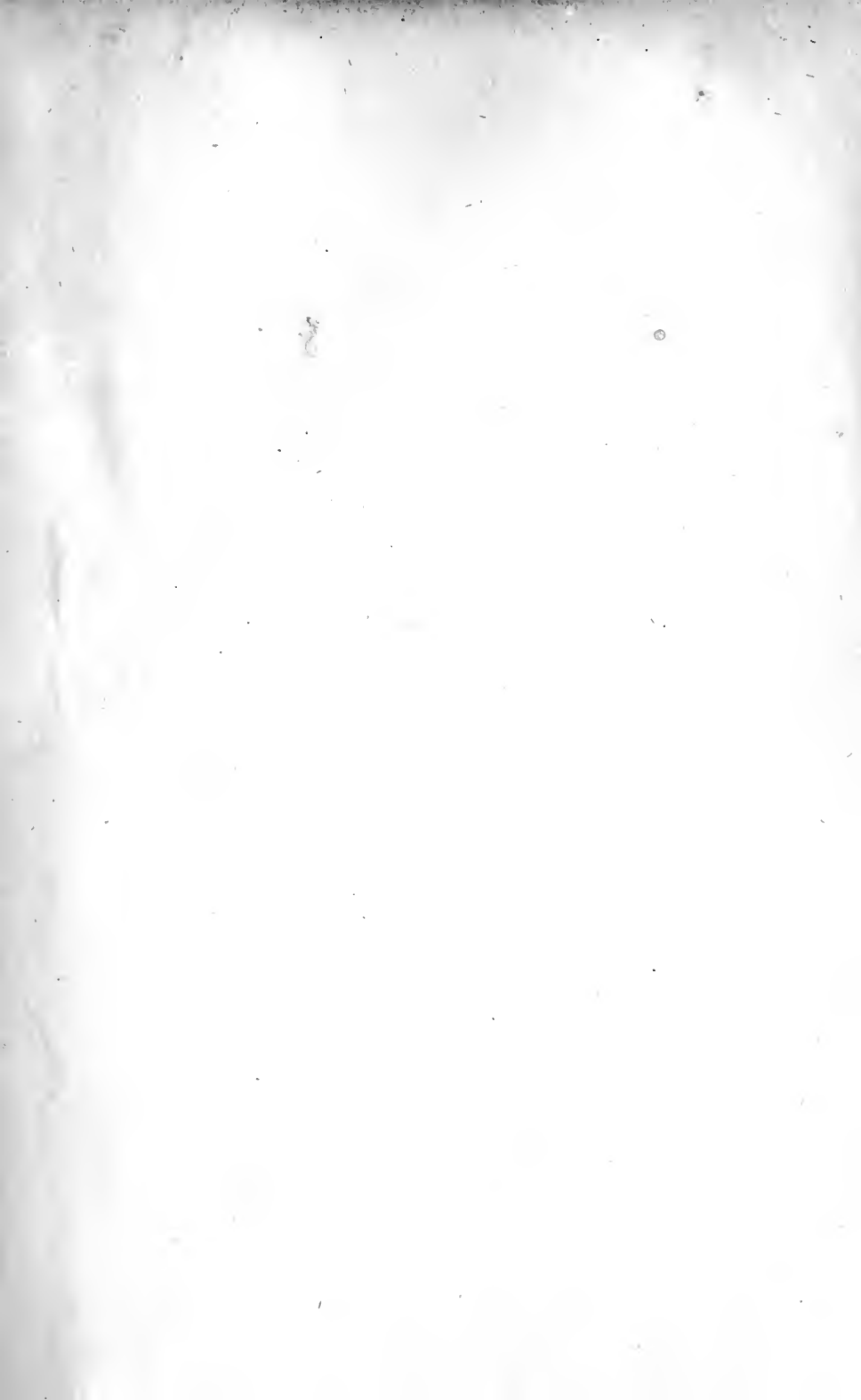


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THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

THE TEXT CAREFULLY REVISED, WITH NOTES AND

A MEMOIR

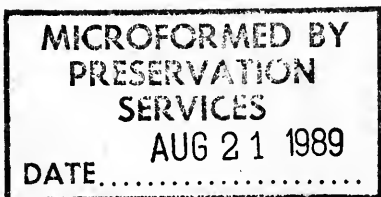
BY

WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

ROSALIND AND HELEN,

A MODERN ECLOGUE.

ADVERTISEMENT TO ROSALIND AND HELEN, &c.

NAPLES, Dec. 20, 1818.

THE story of *Rosalind and Helen* is undoubtedly not an attempt in the highest style of poetry. It is in no degree calculated to excite profound meditation; and if, by interesting the affections and amusing the imagination, it awaken a certain ideal melancholy favourable to the reception of more important impressions, it will produce in the reader all that the writer experienced in the composition. I resigned myself, as I wrote, to the impulse of the feelings which moulded the conception of the story; and this impulse determined the pauses of a measure which only pretends to be regular inasmuch as it corresponds with and expresses the irregularity of the imaginations which inspired it.

I do not know which of the few scattered poems I left in England will be selected by my bookseller to add to this collection. One, which I sent from Italy, was written after a day's excursion among those lovely mountains which surround what was once the retreat, and where is now the sepulchre, of Petrarch. If any one is inclined to condemn the insertion of the introductory lines, which image forth the sudden relief of a state of deep despondency by the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise in autumn, on the highest peak of those delightful mountains, I can only offer as my excuse that they were not erased at the request of a dear friend with whom added years of intercourse only add to my apprehension of its value, and who would have had more right than any one to complain that she has not been able to extinguish in me the very power of delineating sadness.

SCENE.—*The Shore of the Lake of Como.*

ROSALIND, HELEN, and her Child.

HELEN.

COME hither, my sweet Rosalind.

'Tis long since thou and I have met :

And yet methinks it were unkind

Those moments to forget.

Come, sit by me. I see thee stand

By this lone lake, in this far land,

Thy loose hair in the light wind flying,

Thy sweet voice to each tone of even

United, and thine eyes replying

To the hues of yon fair heaven.

Come, gentle friend : wilt sit by me,

And be as thou wert wont to be

Ere we were disunited ?

None doth behold us now : the power

That led us forth at this lone hour

Will be but ill requited

If thou depart in scorn : oh come,

And talk of our abandoned home !

Remember, this is Italy,

And we are exiles. Talk with me

Of that our land, whose wilds and floods,

Barren and dark although they be,

Were dearer than these chesnut-woods ;

Those heathy paths, that inland stream,

And the blue mountains, shapes which seem

Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream :

Which that we have abandoned now

Weighs on the heart like that remorse

Which altered friendship leaves. I seek

No more our youthful intercourse :

That cannot be. Rosalind, speak,

Speak to me ! Leave me not !—When morn did come,

When evening fell upon our common home,

When for one hour we parted—Do not frown ;

I would not chide thee, though thy faith is broken.

But turn to me. Oh by this cherished token

Of woven hair, which thou wilt not disown,
Turn, as 'twere but the memory of me,
And not my scornèd self, who prayed to thee!

ROSALIND.

Is it a dream, or do I see
And hear frail Helen? I would flee
Thy tainting touch; but former years
Arise, and bring forbidden tears;
And my o'erburdened memory
Seeks yet its lost repose in thee.
I share thy crime. I cannot choose
But weep for thee; mine own strange grief
But seldom stoops to such relief:
Nor ever did I love thee less,
Though mourning o'er thy wickedness
Even with a sister's woe. I knew
What to the evil world is due,
And therefore sternly did refuse
To link me with the infamy
Of one so lost as Helen. Now,
Bewildered by my dire despair,
Wondering I blush and weep that thou
Shouldst love me still—thou only!—There,
Let us sit on that grey stone,
Till our mournful talk be done.

HELEN.

Alas! not there; I cannot bear
The murmur of this lake to hear,
A sound from there, Rosalind dear;
Which never yet I heard elsewhere
But in our native land, recurs,
Even here where now we meet. It stirs
Too much of suffocating sorrow!
In the dell of yon dark chesnut-wood
Is a stone seat, a solitude
Less like our own:—The ghost of Peace
Will not desert this spot. Tomorrow,
If thy kind feelings should not cease,
We may sit here.

ROSALIND.

Thou lead, my sweet,

And I will follow.

HENRY.

'Tis Fenici's seat

Where you are going?—This is not the way,
Mamma; it leads behind those trees that grow
Close to the little river.

HELEN.

Yes, I know;

I was bewildered. Kiss me and be gay,
Dear boy; why do you sob?

HENRY.

I do not know:

But it might break any one's heart to see
You and the lady cry so bitterly.

HELEN.

It is a gentle child, my friend. Go home,
Henry, and play with Lilla till I come.
We only cried with joy to see each other;
We are quite merry now.—Good night.

The boy

Lifted a sudden look upon his mother;
And, in the gleam of forced and hollow joy
Which lightened o'er her face, laughed with the glee
Of light and unsuspecting infancy,
And whispered in her ear, "Bring home with you
That sweet strange lady-friend." Then off he flew;
But stopped, and beckoned with a meaning smile,
Where the road turned. Pale Rosalind the while,
Hiding her face, stood weeping silently.

In silence then they took the way
Beneath the forest's solitude.

It was a vast and antique wood

Through which they took their way;

And the grey shades of evening
O'er that green wilderness did fling

Still deeper solitude.

Pursuing still the path that wound
The vast and knotted trees around,

Through which slow shades were wandering,
To a deep lawny dell they came,
To a stone seat beside a spring ;
O'er which the columned wood did frame
A roofless temple, like the fane
Where, ere new creeds could faith obtain,
Man's early race once knelt beneath
The overhanging deity.
O'er this fair fountain hung the sky,
Now spangled with rare stars. The snake,
The pale snake, that with eager breath
Creeps here his noontide thirst to slake,
Is beaming with many a mingled hue
Shed from yon dome's eternal blue,
When he floats on that dark and lucid flood
In the light of his own loveliness ;
And the birds that in the fountain dip
Their plumes, with fearless fellowship,
Above and round him wheel and hover.
The fitful wind is heard to stir
One solitary leaf on high ;
The chirping of the grasshopper
Fills every pause. There is emotion
In all that dwells at noontide here :
Then through the intricate wild wood
A maze of life and light and motion
Is woven. But there is stillness now ;
Gloom, and the trance of Nature now.
The snake is in his cave asleep ;
The birds are on the branches dreaming :
Only the shadows creep ;
Only the glow-worm is gleaming ;
Only the owls and the nightingales
Wake in this dell when daylight fails,
And grey shades gather in the woods ;—
And the owls have all fled far away
In a merrier glen to hoot and play,
For the moon is veiled and sleeping now.
The accustomed nightingale still broods
On her accustomed bough ;
But she is mute, for her false mate
Has fled and left her desolate.

This silent spot tradition old
Had peopled with the spectral dead.
For the roots of the speaker's hair felt cold
And stiff, as with tremulous lips he told
That a hellish shape at midnight led
The ghost of a youth with hoary hair,
And sate on the seat beside him there,
Till a naked child came wandering by,
When the fiend would change to a lady fair.
A fearful tale ! The truth was worse :
For here a sister and a brother
Had solemnized a monstrous curse,
Meeting in this fair solitude :
For beneath yon very sky
Had they resigned to one another
Body and soul. The multitude,
Tracking them to the secret wood,
Tore limb from limb their innocent child,
And stabbed and trampled on its mother ;
But the youth, for God's most holy grace,
A priest saved to burn in the market-place.

Duly at evening Helen came
To this lone silent spot,
From the wrecks of a tale of wilder sorrow
So much of sympathy to borrow
As soothed her own dark lot.
Duly each evening from her home
With her fair child would Helen come
To sit upon that antique seat,
While the hues of day were pale.
And the bright boy beside her feet
Now lay, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her ;
Now where some sudden impulse calls
Followed.¹ He was a gentle boy,
And in all gentle sports took joy.
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,
With a small feather for a sail,
His fancy on that spring would float,
If some invisible breeze might stir
Its marble calm. And Helen smiled

Through tears of awe on the gay child,
 To think that a boy as fair as he,
 In years which never more may be,
 By that same fount, in that same wood,
 The like sweet fancies had pursued ;
 And that a mother, lost like her,
 Had mournfully sate watching him.
 Then all the scene was wont to swim
 Through the mist of a burning tear.

For many months had Helen known
 This scene ; and now she thither turned
 Her footsteps, not alone.
 The friend whose falsehood she had mourned
 Sate with her on that seat of stone.
 Silent they sate, for evening,
 And the power its glimpses bring,
 Had with one awful shadow quelled
 The passion of their grief. They sate
 With linkèd hands, for unrepelled
 Had Helen taken Rosalind's.
 Like the autumn wind when it unbinds
 The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair
 Which is twined in the sultry summer air
 Round the walls of an outworn sepulchre,
 Did the voice of Helen, sad and sweet,
 And the sound of her heart that ever beat
 As with sighs and words she breathed on her,
 Unbind the knots of her friend's despair,
 Till her thoughts were free to float and flow ;
 And from her labouring bosom now,
 Like the bursting of a prisoned flame,
 The voice of a long-pent sorrow came.

ROSALIND.

I saw the dark earth fall upon
 The coffin ; and I saw the stone
 Laid over him whom this cold breast
 Had pillowed to his nightly rest.
 Thou knowest not, thou canst not know,
 My agony. Oh ! I could not weep :
 The sources whence such blessings flow

Were not to be approached by me !
But I could smile, and I could sleep,
Though with a self-accusing heart.
In morning's light, in evening's gloom,
I watched—and would not thence depart—
My husband's unlamented tomb.
My children knew their sire was gone ;
But, when I told them " He is dead,"
They laughed aloud in frantic glee,
They clapped their hands and leaped about,
Answering each other's exstasy
With many a prank and merry shout ;
But I sat silent and alone,
Wrapped in the mock of mourning-weed.
They laughed, for he was dead ; but I
Sate with a hard and tearless eye,
And with a heart which would deny
The secret joy it could not quell,
Low muttering o'er his loathèd name ;
Till from that self-contention came
Remorse where sin was none—a hell
Which in pure spirits should not dwell.

I'll tell thee truth. He was a man
Hard, selfish, loving only gold,
Yet full of guile : his pale eyes ran
With tears which each some falsehood told,
And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek.
He was a coward to the strong ;
He was a tyrant to the weak,
On whom his vengeance he would wreak :
For scorn, whose arrows search the heart,
From many a stranger's eye would dart,
And on his memory cling, and follow
His soul to its home so cold and hollow.
He was a tyrant to the weak,
And we were such, alas the day !
Oft, when my little ones at play
Were in youth's natural lightness gay,
Or if they listened to some tale
Of travellers or of fairyland,

When the light from the wood fire's dying brand
Flashed on their faces,—if they heard,
Or thought they heard, upon the stair
His footstep, the suspended word
Died on my lips. We all grew pale;
The babe at my bosom was hushed with fear
If it thought it heard its father near;
And my two wild boys would near my knee
Cling, cowed and cowering fearfully.

I'll tell thee truth : I loved another.

His name in my ear was ever ringing,
His form to my brain was ever clinging ;
Yet, if some stranger breathed that name,
My lips turned white, and my heart beat fast.
My nights were once haunted by dreams of flame,
My days were dim in the shadow cast
By the memory of the same.
Day and night, day and night,
He was my breath and life and light,
For three short years which soon were past.
In the fourth, my gentle mother¹
Led me to the shrine, to be
His sworn bride eternally.
And now we stood on the altar-stair,
When my father came from a distant land,
And with a loud and fearful cry
Rushed between us suddenly.
I saw the stream of his thin grey hair,
I saw his lean and lifted hand,
And heard his words—and live ! O God !
Wherefore do I live ?—" Hold, hold !"
He cried, " I tell thee 'tis her brother !
Thy mother, boy, beneath the sod
Of yon churchyard rests in her shroud so cold.
I am now weak and pale and old :
We were once dear to one another,
I and that corpse. Thou art our child !"
Then with a laugh both long and wild
The youth upon the pavement fell :
They found him dead ! All looked on me,
The spasms of my despair to see ;

But I was calm. I went away ;
I was clammy-cold like clay.
I did not weep—I did not speak ;
But day by day, week after week,
I walked about like a corpse alive.
Alas ! sweet friend, you must believe
This heart is stone—it did not break.

My father lived a little while ;
But all might see that he was dying,
He smiled with such a woful smile.
When he was in the churchyard lying
Among the worms, we grew quite poor,
So that no one would give us bread ;
My mother looked at me, and said
Faint words of cheer, which only meant
That she could die and be content ;
So I went forth from the same church-door
To another husband's bed.
And this was he who died at last,
When weeks and months and years had passed,
Through which I firmly did fulfil
My duties, a devoted wife,
With the stern step of vanquished will
Walking beneath the night of life,
Whose hours extinguished, like slow rain
Falling for ever, pain by pain,
The very hope of death's dear rest ;
Which, since the heart within my breast
Of natural life was dispossessed,
Its strange sustainer there had been.

When flowers were dead, and grass was green
Upon my mother's grave—that mother
Whom to outlive, and cheer, and make
My wan eyes glitter for her sake,
Was my vowed task, the single care
Which once gave life to my despair—
When she was a thing that did not stir,
And the crawling worms were cradling her
To a sleep more deep and so more sweet
Than a baby's rocked on its nurse's knee.

I lived ; a living pulse then beat
Beneath my heart, that awakened me.
What was this pulse so warm and free ?
Alas ! I knew it could not be
My own dull blood. 'Twas like a thought
Of liquid love, that spread and wrought
Under my bosom and in my brain,
And crept with the blood through every vein ;
And hour by hour, day after day,
The wonder could not charm away,
But laid in sleep my wakeful pain,—
Until I knew it was a child,
And then I wept. For long long years
These frozen eyes had shed no tears :
But now—'Twas the season fair and mild
When April has wept itself to May:
I sate through the sweet sunny day
By my window bowered round with leaves,
And down my cheeks the quick tears fell
Like twinkling raindrops from the eaves
When warm Spring-showers are passing o'er.
O Helen, none can ever tell
The joy it was to weep once more !

I wept to think how hard it were
To kill my babe, and take from it
The sense of light, and the warm air,
And my own fond and tender care,
And love, and smiles ; ere I knew yet
That these for it might, as for me,
Be the masks of a grinning mockery.
And haply, I would dream, 'twere sweet
To feed it from my faded breast,
Or mark my own heart's restless beat
Rock it to its untroubled rest ;
And watch the growing soul beneath
Dawn in faint smiles ; and hear its breath,
Half interrupted by calm sighs ;
And search the depth of its fair eyes
For long-departed memories.
And so I lived till that sweet load
Was lightened. Darkly forward flowed

The stream of years, and on it bore
 Two shapes of gladness to my sight ;
 Two other babes, delightful more,
 In my lost soul's abandoned night,
 Than their own country-ships may be
 Sailing towards wrecked mariners"
 Who cling to the rocks of a wintry sea.
 For each, as it came, brought soothing tears ;
 And a loosening warmth, as each one lay
 Sucking the sullen milk away,
 About my frozen heart did play,
 And weaned it, oh how painfully !
 (As they themselves were weaned each one
 From that sweet food)—even from the thirst
 Of death and nothingness and rest,
 Strange inmate of a living breast ;
 Which all that I had undergone
 Of grief and shame, since she who first
 The gates of that dark refuge closed
 Came to my sight, and almost burst
 The seal of that Lethean spring. . . .
 But these fair shadows interposed :
 For all delights are shadows now !
 And from my brain to my dull brow
 The heavy tears gather and flow :
 I cannot speak—Oh let me weep !

The tears which fell from her wan eyes
 Glimmered among the moonlight dew :
 Her deep hard sobs and heavy sighs
 Their echoes in the darkness threw.
 When she grew calm, she thus did keep
 The tenor of her tale :—

"He died,
 I know not how. He was not old,
 If age be numbered by its years :
 But he was bowed and bent with fears,
 Pale with the quenchless thirst of gold,
 Which, like fierce fever, left him weak ;
 And his strait lip and bloated cheek
 Were warped in spasms by hollow sneers ;
 And selfish cares with barren plough,

Not age, had lined his narrow brow,
And foul and cruel thoughts, which feed
Upon the withering life within,
Like vipers on some poisonous weed.
Whether his ill were death or sin
None knew, until he died indeed,
And then men owned they were the same.

“Seven days within my chamber lay
That corse, and my babes made holiday.
At last, I told them what is death.
The eldest, with a kind of shame,
Came to my knees with silent breath,
And sate awe-stricken at my feet ;
And soon the others left their play,
And sate there too. It is unmeet
To shed on the brief flower of youth
The withering knowledge of the grave.
From me remorse then wrung that truth :
I could not bear the joy which gave
Too just a response to mine own.
In vain,—I dared not feign a groan ;
And in their artless looks I saw,
Between the mists of fear and awe,
That my own thought was theirs ; and they
Expressed it not in words, but said
Each in its heart how every day
Will pass in happy work and play,
Now *he* is dead and gone away.

“After the funeral all our kin
Assembled, and the will was read.
My friend, I tell thee, even the dead
Have strength, their putrid shrouds within,
To blast and torture. Those who live
Still fear the living ; but a corse
Is merciless, and Power doth give
To such pale tyrants half the spoil
He rends from those who groan and toil,
Because they blush not with remorse
Among their crawling worms. Behold,
I have no child ! My tale grows old

With grief, and staggers : let it reach
The limits of my feeble speech,
And languidly at length recline
On the brink of its own grave and mine.

“Thou know’st what a thing is poverty
Among the fallen on evil days.
’Tis crime, and fear, and infamy,
And houseless want in frozen ways
Wandering ungarmented, and pain,
And, worse than all, that inward stain,
Foul self-contempt, which drowns in sneers
Youth’s starlight smile, and makes its tears
First like hot gall, then dry for ever.
And well thou know’st a mother never
Could doom her children to this ill,—
And well he knew the same. The will
Imported that, if e’er again

I sought my children to behold,
Or in my birthplace did remain
Beyond three days, whose hours were told,
They should inherit nought. And he
To whom next came their patrimony—
A sallow lawyer, cruel and cold—

Aye watched me, as the will was read,
With eyes askance, which sought to see
The secrets of my agony ;
And, with close lips and anxious brow,
Stood canvassing still to and fro
The chance of my resolve, and all
The dead man’s caution just did call ;

For in that killing lie ’twas said—
‘She is adulterous, and doth hold
In secret that the christian creed
Is false, and therefore is much need
That I should have a care to save
My children from eternal fire.’

Friend, he was sheltered by the grave,
And therefore dared to be a liar !
In truth, the Indian on the pyre
Of her dead husband, half-consumed,
As well might there be false as I

To those abhorred embraces doomed,
 Far worse than fire's brief agony.
 As to the christian creed, if true
 Or false, I never questioned it :
 I took it as the vulgar do :
 Nor my vexed soul had leisure yet
 To doubt the things men say, or deem
 That they are other than they seem.

"All present who those crimes did hear,
 In feigned or actual scorn and fear—
 Men, women; children—slunk away,
 Whispering with self-contented pride
 Which half suspects its own base lie.
 I spoke to none, nor did abide,
 But silently I went my way ;
 Nor noticed I where joyously
 Sate my two younger babes at play,
 In the courtyard through which I passed ;
 But went with footsteps firm and fast,
 Till I came to the brink of the ocean green.
 And there a woman with grey hairs,
 Who had my mother's servant been,
 Kneeling, with many tears and prayers,
 Made me accept a purse of gold—
 Half of the earnings she had kept
 To refuge her when weak and old.

"With woe which never sleeps or slept,
 I wander now.—'Tis a vain thought :
 But on yon Alp whose snowy head
 Mid the azure air is islanded
 (We see it—o'er the flood of cloud
 Which sunrise from its eastern caves
 Drives, wrinkling into golden waves,
 Hung with its precipices proud—
 From that grey stone where first we met)—
 There—(now who knows the dead feel nought ?)—
 Should be my grave ; for he who yet
 Is my soul's soul once said : 'Twere sweet
 Mid stars and lightnings to abide,
 And winds, and lulling snows that beat
 With their soft flakes the mountain wide.

When weary meteor-lamps repose,
And languid storms their pinions close :
And all things strong and bright and pure,
And ever during, aye endure.
Who knows, if one were buried there,
But these things might our spirits make,
Amid the all-surrounding air,
Their own eternity partake ?'
Then 'twas a wild and playful saying,
At which I laughed, or seemed to laugh.
They were his words : now heed my praying,
And let them be my epitaph ;
Thy memory for a term may be
My monument. Wilt remember me ?
I know thou wilt ; and canst forgive,
Whilst in this erring world to live
My soul disdained not, that I thought
Its lying forms were worthy aught,
And much less thee."

HELEN.

Oh speak not so !

But come to me, and pour thy woe
Into this heart, full though it be—
Ay, overflowing—with its own.
I thought that grief had severed me
From all beside who weep and groan,
Its likeness upon earth to be—
Its express image ; but thou art
More wretched. Sweet, we will not part
Henceforth, if death be not division ;
If so, the dead feel no contrition.
But wilt thou hear, since last we parted,
All that has left me broken-hearted ?

ROSALIND.

Yes, speak. The faintest stars are scarcely shorn
Of their thin beams by that delusive morn
Which sinks again in darkness, like the light
Of early love soon lost in total night.

HELEN.

Alas ! Italian winds are mild,
But my bosom is cold—wintry cold.
When the warm air weaves among the fresh leaves

Soft music, my poor brain is wild,
And I am weak like a nursling child,
Though my soul with grief is grey and old.

ROSALIND.

Weep not at thine own words, though they must make
Me weep. What is thy tale?

HELEN.

I fear 'twill shake
Thy gentle heart with tears.—Thou well
Rememberest when we met no more ;
And, though I dwelt with Lionel,
That friendless caution pierced me sore
With grief—a wound my spirit bore
Indignantly. But, when he died,
With him lay dead both hope and pride.

Alas ! all hope is buried now.
But then men dreamed the aged earth
Was labouring in that mighty birth
Which many a poet and a sage
Has aye foreseen—the happy age
When truth and love shall dwell below
Among the works and ways of men ;
Which on this world not power but will
Even now is wanting to fulfil.
Among mankind what thence befell
Of strife, how vain, is known too well ;
When liberty's dear pæan fell
Mid murderous howls. To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon-walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O liberty !
And, as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith,
And hope, and courage mute in death ;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth. In every other,
First life, then love, its course begins,
Though they be children of one mother ;

And so through this dark world they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet :
But he loved all things ever. Then
He passed amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armed power,
Pleading for a world of woe.
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro,
Mid the passions wild of humankind
He stood, like a spirit calming them ;
For, it was said, his words could bind
Like music the lulled crowd, and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream
Which mortals truth and reason deem,
But *is* revenge and fear and pride.
Joyous he was ; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet talk,—
As, where the evening star may walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendour quiver.
His very gestures touched to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before : his presence stung
With their victim's pain the torturers,[†]
And none knew how ; and, through their ears,
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlocked the hearts of those who keep
Gold, the world's bond of slavery.
Men wondered and some sneered to see
One sow what he could never reap :
"For he is rich," they said, "and young,
And might drink from the depths of luxury.
If he seeks Fame, Fame never crowned
The champion of a trampled creed :
If he seeks Power, Power is enthroned
Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to feed
Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil
Those who would sit near Power must toil ;
And such, there sitting, all may see.
What seeks he ? All that others seek
He casts away, like a vile weed

Which the sea casts unreturningly.

That poor and hungry men should break
The laws which wreak them toil and scorn

We understand ; but Lionel,
We know, is rich and nobly born."

So wondered they ; yet all men loved

Young Lionel, though few approved ;

All but the priests, whose hatred fell

Like the unseen blight of a smiling day,

The withering honey-dew which clings

Under the bright-green buds of May

Whilst they unfold their emerald wings :

For he made verses wild and queer

On the strange creeds priests hold so dear

Because they bring them land and gold.

Of devils and saints, and all such gear,

He made tales which whoso heard or read

Would laugh till he were almost dead.

So this grew a proverb : " Don't get old

Till Lionel's *Banquet in Hell* you hear,

And then you will laugh yourself young again."

So the priests hated him, and he

Repaid their hate with cheerful glee.

Ah ! smiles and joyance quickly died,

For public hope grew pale and dim

In an altered time and tide,

And in its wasting withered him ;

As a summer flower that blows too soon

Droops in the smile of the waning moon,

When it scatters through an April night

The frozen dews of wrinkling blight.

None now hoped more. Grey Power was seated

Safely on her ancestral throne ;

And Faith, the python, undefeated,

Even to its blood-stained steps dragged on

Her foul and wounded train ; and men

Were trampled and deceived again ;

And words and shows again could bind

The wailing tribes of humankind

In scorn and famine. Fire and blood

Raged round the raging multitude,

To fields remote by tyrants sent
To be the scornèd instrument
With which they drag from mines of gore
The chains their slaves yet ever wore.
And in the streets men met each other,
And by old altars and in halls,
And smiled again at festivals :
But each man found in his heart's brother
Cold cheer ; for all, though half deceived,
The outworn creeds again believed.
And the same round anew began
Which the weary world yet ever ran.

Many then wept, not tears but gall,
Within their hearts, like drops which fall
Wasting the fountain-stone away.
And in that dark and evil day
Did all desires and thoughts that claim
Men's care—ambition, friendship, fame,
Love, hope, though hope was now despair—
Indue the colours of this change ;
As from the all-surrounding air
The earth takes hues obscure and strange,
When storm and earthquake linger there.

And so, my friend, it then befell
To many, most to Lionel ;
Whose hope was like the life of youth
Within him, and, when dead, became
A spirit of unresting flame,
Which goaded him in his distress
Over the world's vast wilderness.
Three years he left his native land,
And in the fourth, when he returned,¹
None knew him : he was stricken deep
With some disease of mind, and turned
Into aught unlike Lionel.
On him—on whom, did he pause in sleep,
Serenest smiles were wont to keep,
And, did he wake, a wingèd band
Of bright Persuasions, which had fed
On his sweet lips and liquid eyes,

Kept their swift pinions half outspread
 To do on men his least command—
 On him, whom once 'twas paradise
 Even to behold, now misery lay.
 In his own heart 'twas merciless :
 To all things else none may express
 Its innocence and tenderness.

'Twas said that he had refuge sought
 In love from his unquiet thought
 In distant lands, and been deceived
 By some strange show ; for there were found,
 Blotted with tears (as those relieved
 By their own words are wont to do),
 These mournful verses on the ground,—
 By all who read them blotted too.

“How am I changed ! My hopes were once like fire
 I loved, and I believed that life was love.
 How am I lost ! On wings of swift desire
 Among heaven's winds my spirit once did move.
 I slept, and silver dreams did aye inspire
 My liquid sleep. I woke, and did approve
 All Nature to my heart, and thought to make
 A paradise of earth for one sweet sake.

“I love, but I believe in love no more :
 I feel desire, but hope not. Oh from sleep
 Most vainly must my weary brain implore
 Its long-lost flattery now ! I wake to weep,
 And sit through the long day gnawing the core
 Of my bitter heart, and, like a miser, keep—
 Since none in what I feel take pain or pleasure—
 To my own soul its self-consuming treasure.”

He dwelt beside me near the sea ;
 And oft in evening did we meet,
 When the waves, beneath the starlight, flee
 O'er the yellow sands with silver feet,—
 And talked. Our talk was sad and sweet,
 Till slowly from his mien there passed
 The desolation which it spoke ;
 And smiles—as, when the lightning's blast
 Has parched some heaven-delighting oak,

The next Spring shows leaves pale and rare,
But like flowers delicate and fair,
On its rent boughs—again arrayed
His countenance in tender light.
His words grew subtle fire, which made
The air his hearers breathed delight :
His motions, like the winds, were free,
Which bend the bright grass gracefully,
Then fade away in circlets faint :
And wingèd Hope—on which upborne
His soul seemed hovering in his eyes,
Like some bright spirit newly born
Floating amid the sunny skies—
Sprang forth from his rent heart anew.
Yet o'er his talk and looks and mien,
Tempering their loveliness too keen,
Past woe its shadow backward threw ;
Till, like an exhalation spread
From flowers half drunk with evening dew,
They did become infectious,—sweet
And subtle mists of sense and thought ;
Which wrapped us soon, when we might meet,
Almost from our own looks, and aught
The wide world holds. And so his mind
Was healed, while mine grew sick with fear :
For ever now his health declined,
Like some frail bark which cannot bear
The impulse of an altered wind,
Though prosperous. And my heart grew full,
Mid its new joy, of a new care :
For his cheek became, not pale, but fair,
As rose-o'ershadowed lilies are ;
And soon his deep and sunny hair,
In this alone less beautiful,
Like grass in tombs grew wild and rare.
The blood in his translucent veins
Beat not like animal life, but love
Seemed now its sullen springs to move,
When life had failed, and all its pains ;
And sudden sleep would seize him oft,
Like death, so calm,—but that a tear,
His pointed eyelashes between,
Would gather in the light serene

Of smiles whose lustre bright and soft
 Beneath lay undulating there.
His breath was like inconstant flame,
As eagerly it went and came;
And I hung o'er him in his sleep,
 Till, like an image in the lake
 Which rains disturb, my tears would break
The shadow of that slumber deep.
Then he would bid me not to weep,
And say, with flattery false yet sweet,
That death and he could never meet,
If I would never part with him.
And so we loved, and did unite
 All that in us was yet divided :
For—when he said that many a rite,
 By men to bind but once provided,
 Could not be shared by him and me,
 Or they would kill him in their glee—
 I shuddered, and then laughing said :
 “ We will have rites our faith to bind ;
But our church shall be the starry night,
 Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
 And our priest the muttering wind.”

'Twas sunset as I spoke. One star
Had scarce burst forth, when from afar
The ministers of misrule sent
 Seized upon Lionel, and bore
 His chained limbs to a dreary tower
 In the midst of a city vast and wide :—
For he, they said, from his mind had bent
Against their gods keen blasphemy,
For which, though his soul must roasted be
In hell's red lakes immortally,
 Yet even on earth must he abide
The vengeance of their slaves—a trial,
 I think, men call it. What avail
Are prayers and tears, which chase denial
From the fierce savage nursed in hate ?
 What the knit soul that pleading and pale
Makes wan the quivering cheek, which late

It painted with its own delight?
We were divided. As I could,
I stilled the tingling of my blood;
And followed him in their despite,
As a widow follows, pale and wild,
The murderers and corse of her only child.
And when we came to the prison-door,
And I prayed to share his dungeon-floor
With prayers which rarely have been spurned,
And when men drove me forth, and I
Stared with blank frenzy on the sky,—
A farewell look of love he turned,
Half calming me; then gazed awhile,
As if through that black and massy pile,
And through the crowd around him there,
And through the dense and murky air
And the thronged streets, he did espy
What poets know and prophesy;
And said, with voice that made them shiver,
And clung like music in my brain,
And which the mute walls spoke again,
Prolonging it with deepened strain—
“Fear not the tyrants shall rule for ever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river
Whose waves they have tainted with death:
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams and rages and swells,
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks, in the surge of eternity.”

I dwelt beside the prison-gate;
And the strange crowd that out and in
Passed (some, no doubt, with mine own fate)
Might have fretted me with its ceaseless din,
But the fever of care was louder within.
Soon, but too late, in penitence
Or fear, his foes released him thence.
I saw his thin and languid form,
As, leaning on the jailor's arm—
Whose hardened eyes grew moist the while
To meet his mute and faded smile,

And hear his words of kind farewell—
He tottered forth from his damp cell.

Many had never wept before
From whom fast tears then gushed and fell ;

Many will relent no more
Who sobbed like infants then ; ay, all
Who thronged the prison's stony hall,
The rulers or the slaves of law,
Felt with a new surprise and awe
That they were human,—till strong shame
Made them again become the same.

The prison-bloodhounds, huge and grim,
From human looks the infection caught,
And fondly crouched and fawned on him.
And men have heard the prisoners say
Who in their rotting dungeons lay

That from that hour, throughout one day,
The fierce despair and hate which kept
Their trampled bosoms almost slept,
When, like twin vultures, they hung feeding
On each heart's wound, wide-torn and bleeding,—
Because their jailors' rule, they thought,
Grew merciful, like a parent's sway.

I know not how, but we were free.
And Lionel sate alone with me,
As the carriage drove through the streets apace ;
And we looked upon each other's face ;
And the blood in our fingers intertwined
Ran like the thoughts of a single mind,
As the swift emotions went and came
Through the veins of each united frame.
So through the long long streets we passed
Of the million-peopled city vast ;
Which is that desert where each one
Seeks his mate, yet is alone,
Beloved and sought and mourned of none ;—
Until the clear blue sky was seen,
And the grassy meadows bright and green.
And then I sunk in his embrace,
Enclosing there a mighty space
Of love. And so we travelled on

By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns and villages and towers,
Day after day of happy hours.
It was the azure time of June,
When the skies are deep in the stainless noon,
And the warm and fitful breezes shake
The fresh green leaves of the hedge-row briar ;
And there were odours then to make
The very breath we did respire
A liquid element whereon
Our spirits, like delighted things
That walk the air on subtle wings,
Floated and mingled far away,
Mid the warm winds of the sunny day.
And, when the evening star came forth
Above the curve of the new bent moon,
And light and sound ebb'd from the earth,
Like the tide of the full and weary sea
To the depths of its own tranquillity,
Our natures to its own repose
Did the earth's breathless sleep attune.
Like flowers which on each other close
Their languid leaves when daylight's gone
We lay ; till new emotions came
Which seemed to make each mortal frame
One soul of interwoven flame,—
A life in life, a second birth
In worlds diviner far than earth—
Which (like two strains of harmony
That mingle in the silent sky,
Then slowly disunite) passed by,
And left the tenderness of tears,
A soft oblivion of all fears,
A sweet sleep. So we travelled on
Till we came to the home of Lionel,
Among the mountains wild and lone,
Beside the hoary western sea,
Which near the verge of the echoing shore
The massy forest shadowed o'er.

The ancient steward with hair all hoar,
As we alighted, wept to see

His master changed so fearfully ;
And the old man's sobs did waken me
From my dream of unremaining gladness.
The truth flashed o'er me like quick madness,
When I looked, and saw that there was death
On Lionel. Yet day by day
He lived, till fear grew hope and faith,
And in my soul I dared to say,
"Nothing so bright can pass away :
Death is dark and foul and dull,
But he is—oh how beautiful!"
Yet day by day he grew more weak,
And his sweet voice, when he might speak,
Which ne'er was loud, became more low ;
And the light which flashed through his waxen cheek
Grew faint, as the rose-like hues which flow
From sunset o'er the alpine snow.
And death seemed not like death in him,
For the spirit of life o'er every limb
Lingered, a mist of sense and thought.
When the summer wind faint odours brought
From mountain-flowers, even as it passed,
His cheek would change, as the noonday sea
Which the dying breeze sweeps fitfully.
If but a cloud the sky o'ercast,
You might see his colour come and go ;
And the softest strain of music made
Sweet smiles, yet sad, arise and fade
Amid the dew of his tender eyes :
And the breath with intermitting flow,
Made his pale lips quiver and part.
You might hear the beatings of his heart,
Quick but not strong ; and, with my tresses
When oft he playfully would bind
In the bowers of mossy lonelineses
His neck, and win me so to mingle
In the sweet depth of woven caresses,
And our faint limbs were intertwined,—
Alas ! the unquiet life did tingle
From mine own heart through every vein ;
Like a captive, in dreams of liberty,
Who beats the walls of his stony cell.

But his,—it seemed already free,
Like the shadow of fire surrounding me.
On my faint eyes and limbs did dwell
That spirit as it passed; till soon
(As a frail cloud wandering o'er the moon—
Beneath its light, invisible—
Is seen when it folds its grey wings again
To alight on midnight's dusky plain)
I lived and saw, and the gathering soul
Passed from beneath that strong control,
And I fell on a life which was sick with fear
Of all the woe that now I bear.

Amid a bloomless myrtle-wood
On a green and sea-girt promontory
Not far from where we dwelt, there stood,
In record of a sweet sad story,
An altar and a temple bright
led by steps, and o'er the gate
Was sculptured "To Fidelity."
And in the shrine an image sate,
All veiled : but there was seen the light
Of smiles which faintly could express
A mingled pain and tenderness,
Through that ethereal drapery.
The left hand held the head, the right—
Beyond the veil, beneath the skin,
You might see the nerves quivering within—
Was forcing the point of a barbèd dart
Into its side-convulsing heart.
An unskilled hand, yet one informed
With genius, had the marble warmed
With that pathetic life. This tale
It told : A dog had from the sea,
When the tide was raging fearfully,
Dragged Lionel's mother, weak and pale,
Then died beside her on the sand.
And she that temple thence had planned ;
But it was Lionel's own hand
Had wrought the image. Each new moon
That lady did, in this lone fane,
The rites of a religion sweet

Whose god was in her heart and brain.
The seasons' loveliest flowers were strewn
 On the marble floor beneath her feet ;
And she brought crowns of sea-buds white
 Whose odour is so sweet and faint,
And weeds, like branching chrysolite,
 Woven in devices fine and quaint ;
And tears from her brown eyes did stain
 The altar. Need but look upon
 That dying statue fair and wan,
If tears should cease, to weep again.
And rare Arabian odours came
 Through the myrtle-copses, steaming thence
 From the hissing frankincense,
 Whose smoke, wool-white as ocean-foam,
 Hung in dense flocks beneath the dome—
 That ivory dome whose azure night
 With golden stars, like heaven, was bright—
O'er the split cedar's pointed flame.
And the lady's harp would kindle there
The melody of an old air
Softer than sleep ; the villagers
Mixed their religion up with hers,
And, as they listened round, shed tears.

One eve he led me to this fane.
 Daylight on its last purple cloud
Was lingering grey, and soon her strain
 The nightingale began ; now loud,
 Climbing in circles the windless sky,
 Now dying music ; suddenly
 'Tis scattered in a thousand notes ;
 And now to the hushed ear it floats
 Like field-smells known in infancy,—
Then, failing, soothes the air again.
We sate within that temple lone,
Pavilioned round with Parian stone :
His mother's harp stood near, and oft
I had awakened music soft
Amid its wires. The nightingale
Was pausing in her Heaven-taught tale.
"Now drain the cup," said Lionel,

" Which the poet-bird has crowned so well
With the wine of her bright and liquid song !
Heardst thou not sweet words among
That heaven-resounding minstrelsy ?
Heardst thou not that those who die
Awake in a world of ecstasy ?
That love when limbs are interwoven,
And sleep when the night of life is cloven,
And thought to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
And music when one beloved is singing,
Is death ? Let us drain right joyously
The cup which the sweet bird fills for me."

He paused, and to my lips he bent
His own. Like spirit, his words went
Through all my limbs with the speed of fire ;
And his keen eyes, glittering through mine,
Filled me with the flame divine
Which in their orbs was burning far,
Like the light of an unmeasured star
In the sky of midnight dark and deep.
Yes, 'twas his soul that did inspire
Sounds which my skill could ne'er awaken.
And first, I felt my fingers sweep
The harp, and a long quivering cry
Burst from my lips in symphony :
The dusk and solid air was shaken,
As swift and swifter the notes came,
From my touch, that wandered like quick flame,
And from my bosom labouring
With some unutterable thing.
The awful sound of my own voice made
My faint lips tremble. In some mood
Of wordless thought Lionel stood—
So pale that even, beside his cheek,
The snowy column from its shade
Caught whiteness : yet his countenance,
Raised upward, burned with radiance
Of spirit-piercing joy, whose light,
Like the moon struggling through the night
Of whirlwind-rifted clouds, did break
With beams that might not be confined.

I paused. But soon his gestures kindled
New power, as by the moving wind
The waves are lifted ; and my song
To low soft notes now changed and dwindled ;
And, from the twinkling wires among,
My languid fingers drew and flung
Circles of life-dissolving sound,
Yet faint. In æry rings they bound
My Lionel.¹ As every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly ;
And slowly now he turned to me,
As slowly faded from his face
That awful joy. With looks serene
He was soon drawn to my embrace ;
And my wild song then died away
In murmurs. Words I dare not say
We mixed ; and on his lips mine fed
Till they methought felt still and cold.
“What is it with thee, love ?” I said ;—
No look, no word, no motion ! Yes,
There was a change ; but spare to guess,
Nor let that moment’s hope be told.
I looked,—and knew that he was dead ;
And fell, as the eagle on the plain
Falls when life deserts her brain,
And the mortal lightning is veiled again.

Oh that I were now dead ! But such
(Did they not, love, demand too much,
Those dying murmurs ?) he forbad.
Oh that I once again were mad !—
And yet, dear Rosalind, not so,
For I would live to share thy woe.
Sweet boy ! did I forget thee too ?
Alas ! we know not what we do
When we speak words !

No memory more
Is in my mind of that sea-shore.
Madness came on me, and a troop
Of misty shades did seem to sit

Beside me on a vessel's poop,
And the clear north wind was driving it.
Then I heard strange tongues, and saw strange flowers ;
And the stars, methought, grew unlike ours ;
And the azure sky and the stormless sea
Made me believe that I had died,
And waked in a world which was to me
Drear hell, though heaven to all beside.
Then a dead sleep fell on my mind ;
Whilst animal life many long years
Had rescued from a chasm of tears.
And, when I woke, I wept to find
That the same lady, bright and wise,
With silver locks and quick brown eyes,
The mother of my Lionel,
Had tended me in my distress,—
And died some months before. Nor less
Wonder, but far more peace and joy,
Brought in that hour my lovely boy.
For through that trance my soul had well
The impress of thy being kept,
And, if I waked or if I slept,
No doubt, though memory faithless be,
Thy image ever dwelt on me ;
And thus, O Lionel ! like thee
Is our sweet child. 'Tis sure most strange
I knew not of so great a change
As that which gave him birth who now
Is all the solace of my woe.

That Lionel great wealth had left
By will to me—and that, of all,
The ready lies of law bereft
My child and me—might well befall.
But let me think not of the scorn
Which from the meanest I have borne
When, for my child's beloved sake,
I mixed with slaves, to vindicate
The very laws themselves do make.
Let me not say scorn is my fate,
Lest I be proud, suffering the same
With those who live in deathless fame.

She ceased.—“Lo, where red morning through the wood
Is burning o’er the dew !” said Rosalind.
And with these words they rose, and towards the flood
Of the blue lake, beneath the leaves, now wind
With equal steps and fingers intertwined.
Thence to a lonely dwelling—where the shore
Is shadowed with steep rocks, and cypresses
Cleave with their dark-green cones the silent skies,
And with their shadows the clear depths below,
And where a little terrace, from its bowers
Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon-flowers,
Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance o’er
The liquid marble of the windless lake,
And where the aged forest’s limbs look hoar
Under the leaves which their green garments make—
They come. ’Tis Helen’s home; and clean and white,
Like one which tyrants spare on our own land
In some such solitude; its casements bright
Shone through their vine-leaves in the morning sun,
And even within ’twas scarce like Italy.
And, when she saw how all things there were planned
As in an English home, dim memory
Disturbed poor Rosalind: she stood as one
Whose mind is where his body cannot be.
Till Helen led her where her child yet slept,
And said: “Observe—that brow was Lionel’s,
Those lips were his, and so he ever kept
One arm in sleep, pillowing his head with it.
You cannot see his eyes,—they are two wells
Of liquid love. Let us not wake him yet.”
But Rosalind could bear no more, and wept
A shower of burning tears which fell upon
His face; and so his opening lashes shone
With tears unlike his own, as he did leap
In sudden wonder from his innocent sleep.

So Rosalind and Helen lived together
Thenceforth; changed in all else, yet friends again,
Such as they were when o’er the mountain-heather
They wandered in their youth, through sun and rain

And after many years (for human things
Change even like the ocean and the wind)
Her daughter was restored to Rosalind ;
And in their circle thence some visitings
Of joy mid their new calm would intervene.
A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came
And Helen's boy grew with her, and they fed
From the same flowers of thought, until each mind
Like springs which mingle in one flood became ;
And in their union soon their parents saw
The shadow of the peace denied to them.

And Rosalind—for, when the living stem
Is cankered in its heart, the tree must fall—
Died ere her time. And with deep grief and awe
The pale survivors followed her remains,
Beyond the region of dissolving rains,
Up the cold mountain she was wont to call
Her tomb. And on Chiavenna's precipice
They raised a pyramid of lasting ice ;
Whose polished sides, ere day had yet begun,
Caught the first glow of the unrisen sun,
The last, when it had sunk. And through the night
The charioteers of Arctos wheelèd round
Its glittering point, as seen from Helen's home ;
Whose sad inhabitants each year would come,
With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound
With amaranth-flowers, which, in the clime's despite,
Filled the frore air with unaccustomed light.
Such flowers as in the wintry memory bloom
Of one friend left adorned that frozen tomb.

Helen, whose spirit was of softer mould,
Whose sufferings too were less, Death slower led
Into the peace of his dominion cold :
She died among her kindred, being old.
And know that, if love die not in the dead
As in the living, none of mortal kind
Are blest as now Helen and Rosalind.

NOTE ON ROSALIND AND HELEN, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

Rosalind and Helen was begun at Marlow, and thrown aside—till I found it ; and, at my request, it was completed. Shelley had no care for any of his poems that did not emanate from the depths of his mind and develop some high or abstruse truth. When he does touch on human life and the human heart, no pictures can be more faithful, more delicate, more subtle, or more pathetic. He never mentioned love but he shed a grace borrowed from his own nature, that scarcely any other poet has bestowed, on that passion. When he spoke of it as the law of life, which inasmuch as we rebel against we err and injure ourselves and others, he promulgated that which he considered an irrefragable truth. In his eyes it was the essence of our being, and all woe and pain arose from the war made against it by selfishness, or insensibility, or mistake. By reverting in his mind to this first principle, he discovered the source of many emotions, and could disclose the secret of all hearts ; and his delineations of passion and emotion touch the finest chords of our nature.

Rosalind and Helen was finished during the summer of 1818, while we were at the baths of Lucca.

LINES
WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS.

MANY a green isle needs must be
In the deep wide sea of Misery ;
Or the mariner, worn and wan,
Never thus could voyage on—
Day and night, and night and day,
Drifting on his dreary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel's track ;
Whilst, above, the sunless sky,
Big with clouds, hangs heavily,—
And, behind, the tempest fleet
Hurries on with lightning feet,
Riving sail and cord and plank,
Till the ship has almost drank
Death from the o'er-brimming deep,
And sinks down, down, like that sleep
When the dreamer seems to be
Weltering through eternity,—
And the dim low line before
Of a dark and distant shore
Still recedes, as—ever still
Longing with divided will,
But no power to seek or shun—
He is ever drifted on
O'er the unrepenting wave
To the haven of the grave.
What if there no friends will greet ?
What if there no heart will meet
His with love's impatient beat ?
Wander wheresoe'er he may,
Can he dream before that day
To find refuge from distress
In friendship's smile, in love's caress ?
Then 'twill wreak him little woe
Whether such there be or no.
Senseless is the breast, and cold,

Which relenting love would fold ;
Bloodless are the veins, and chill,
Which the pulse of pain did fill ;
Every little living nerve
That from bitter words did swerve
Round the tortured lips and brow
Is like a sapless leaflet now ¹
Frozen upon December's bough.

On the beach of a northern sea
Which tempests shake eternally
As once the wretch there lay to sleep,
Lies a solitary heap,
One white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones,
Where a few grey rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land.
Nor is heard one voice of wail
But the sea-mews' as they sail
O'er the billows of the gale,
Or the whirlwind up and down
Howling,—like a slaughtered town,
When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp of fratricides.
Those unburied bones around
There is many a mournful sound ;
There is no lament for him,
Like a sunless vapour, dim,
Who once clothed with life and thought
What now moves nor murmurs not.

Ay, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide Agony :—
To such a one this morn was led
My bark, by soft winds piloted.
Mid the mountains Euganean,
I stood listening to the pæan
With which the legioned rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestic.
Gathering round with wings all hoar,
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like grey shades, till the eastern heaven

Bursts ; and then, as clouds of even
Flecked with fire and azure lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gale
Through the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming
Follow, down the dark steep streaming,—
Till all is bright and clear and still
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair.
Underneath Day's azure eyes,
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies,—
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite's destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves
With his blue and beaming waves.
Lo ! the sun upsprings behind,
Broad, red, radiant, half-reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline ;
And before that chasm of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,
Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies ;
As the flames of sacrifice
From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt City ! thou hast been
Ocean's child, and then his queen.

Now is come a darker day ;
And thou soon must be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here
Hallow so thy watery bier.
A less drear ruin than than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne, among the waves
Wilt thou be when the sea-mew
Flies, as once before it flew,
O'er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state ;
Save where many a palace-gate
With green sea-flowers overgrown
Like a rock of ocean's own,
Topples o'er the abandoned sea
As the tides change sullenly.
The fisher on his watery way
Wandering at the close of day
Will spread his sail and seize his oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest the dead should, from their sleep
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
Lead a rapid masque of death
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
Quivering through ærial gold,
As I now behold them here,
Would imagine not they were
Sepulchres where human forms,
Like pollution-nourished worms,
To the corpse of Greatness cling,
Murdered and now mouldering.
But, if Freedom should awake
In her omnipotence, and shake
From the Celtic Anarch's hold
All the keys of dungeons cold
Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,

Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime.
If not, perish thou and they,—
Clouds which stain Truth's rising day,
By her sun consumed away !
Earth can spare ye ; while, like flowers,
In the waste of years and hours,
From your dust new nations spring
With more kindly blossoming.

Perish ! Let there only be,
Floating o'er thy hearthless sea
As the garment of thy sky
Clothes the world immortally,
One remembrance, more sublime
Than the tattered pall of Time
Which scarce hides thy visage wan :
That a tempest-cleaving swan
Of the songs of Albion,
Driven from his ancestral streams
By the might of evil dreams,
Found a nest in thee ; and ocean
Welcomed him with such emotion
That its joy grew his, and sprung
From his lips like music flung
O'er a mighty thunder-fit,
Chastening terror. What though yet
Poesy's unfailing river
Which through Albion winds for ever,
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred poet's grave,
Mourn its latest nursling fled ?
What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce canst for this fame repay
Aught thine own,—oh rather say.
Though thy sins and slaveries foul
Overcloud a sunlike soul ?
As the ghost of Homer clings
Round Scamander's wasting springs ;
As divinest Shakespeare's might
Fills Avon and the world with light,
Like Omniscient Power, which he

Imaged mid mortality ;
As the love from Petrarch's urn
Yet amid yon hills doth burn,
A quenchless lamp by which the heart
Sees things unearthly ;—so thou art,
Mighty spirit ! so shall be
The city that did refuge thee !

Lo, the sun floats up the sky,
Like thought-wingèd Liberty,
Till the universal light
Seems to level plain and height.
From the sea a mist has spread,
And the beams of morn lie dead
On the towers of Venice now,
Like its glory long ago.
By the skirts of that grey cloud
Many-domèd Padua proud
Stands, a peopled solitude
Mid the harvest-shining plain ;
Where the peasant heaps his grain
In the garner of his foe,
And the milk-white oxen slow
With the purple vintage strain
Heaped upon the creaking wain,
That the brutal Celt may swill
Drunken sleep with savage will.
And the sickle to the sword
Lies unchanged, though many a lord,
Like a weed whose shade is poison,
Overgrows this region's foison,
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come
To destruction's harvest-home.
Men must reap the things they sow ;
Force from force must ever flow,
Or worse : but 'tis a bitter woe
That love or reason cannot change
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.

Padua ! (thou within whose walls
Those mute guests at festivals,
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,

Played at dice for Ezzelin,
Till Death cried, "I win, I win!"
And Sin cursed to lose the wager;
But Death promised, to assuage her,
That he would petition for
Her to be made Vice-Emperor,
When the destined years were o'er,
Over all between the Po
And the eastern Alpine snow,
Under the mighty Austrian :—
Sin smiled so as Sin only can;
And, since that time, ay long before,
Both have ruled from shore to shore,—
That incestuous pair who follow
Tyrants as the sun the swallow,
As repentance follows crime,
And as changes follow time :)—
In thine halls the lamp of learning,
Padua, now no more is burning.
Like a meteor whose wild way
Is lost over the grave of day,
It gleams betrayed and to betray.
Once remotest nations came
To adore that sacred flame,
When it lit not many a hearth
On this cold and gloomy earth;
Now new fires from antique light
Spring beneath the wide world's might,—
But their spark lies dead in thee,
Trampled out by Tyranny.
As the Norway woodman quells,
In the depth of piny dells,
One light flame among the brakes,
While the boundless forest shakes,
And its mighty trunks are torn,
By the fire thus lowly born;—
The spark beneath his feet is dead;
He starts to see the flames it fed
Howling through the darkened sky
With a myriad tongues victoriously,
And sinks down in fear;—so thou,
O Tyranny! beholdest now

Light around thee, and thou hearest
The loud flames ascend, and fearest.
Grovel on the earth ! ay, hide
In the dust thy purple pride !

Noon descends around me now.
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow ;
When a soft and purple mist,
Like a vaporous amethyst,
Or an air-dissolvèd star
Mingling light and fragrance, far
From the curved horizon's bound
To the point of heaven's profound
Fills the overflowing sky.
And the plains that silent lie
Underneath ; the leaves unsodden
Where the infant Frost has trodden
With his morning-wingèd feet
Whose bright print is gleaming yet ;
And the red and golden vines,
Piercing with their trellised lines
The rough dark-skirted wilderness ;
The dun and bladed grass no less,
Pointing from this hoary tower
In the windless air ; the flower
Glimmering at my feet ; the line
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
In the south dimly islanded ;
And the Alps, whose snows are spread
High between the clouds and sun ;
And of living things each one ;
And my spirit, which so long
Darkened this swift stream of song,—
Interpenetrated lie
By the glory of the sky :
Be it love, light, harmony,
Odour, or the soul of all
Which from heaven like dew doth fall,
Or the mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.

Noon descends ; and after noon

Autumn's evening meets me soon,
Leading the infantine moon,
And that one star which to her
Almost seems to minister.
Half the crimson light she brings
From the sunset's radiant springs.
And the soft dreams of the morn
(Which like wingèd winds had borne,
To that silent isle which lies
Mid remembered agonies,
The frail bark of this lone being)
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing ;
And its ancient pilot, Pain,
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of Life and Agony :
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulf. Even now perhaps
On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folded wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me and those I love
May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,
In a dell mid lawny hills
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound
Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and smell divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine.
We may live so happy there
That the Spirits of the Air,
Envyng us, may even entice
To our healing paradise
The polluting multitude.
But their rage would be subdued
By that clime divine and calm,
And the winds whose wings rain balm
On the uplifted soul, and leaves
Under which the bright sea heaves ;

While each breathless interval
In their whisperings musical
The inspired soul supplies
With its own deep melodies,
And the love which heals all strife,
Circling, like the breath of life,
All things in that sweet abode
With its own mild brotherhood.
They, not it, would change ; and soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again.

JULIAN AND MADDALO.

A CONVERSATION.

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme
 The goats with the green leaves of budding Spring,
 Are saturated not—nor Love with tears.—VIRGIL'S GALLUS.

perfect
 COUNT MADDALO is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud: he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentrated and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming, than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much, and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.

*vs life
 perception of B - an
 appropriate
 penetration but
 not malice*
 Julian is an Englishman of good family; passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible the pious reader will determine. Julian is rather serious.

thought
 Of the Maniac I can give no information. He seems, by his own account, to have been disappointed in love. He was evidently a very cultivated and amiable person when in his right senses. His story, told at length, might be like many other stories of the same kind: the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart.

I RODE one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice. A bare strand
Of hillocks heaped from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds
Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,
Is this ; an uninhabited sea-side,
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,
Abandons. And no other object breaks
✓ The waste, but one dwarf tree, and some few stakes
Broken and unrepared ; and the tide makes
A narrow space of level sand thereon,—
Where 'twas our wont to ride while day went down.
This ride was my delight. I love all waste
And solitary places ; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be :
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows. And, yet more
✓ Than all, with a remembered friend I love
To ride as then I rode ;—for the winds drove
The living spray along the sunny air
Into our faces ; the blue heavens were bare,
Stripped to their depths by the awakening north ;
And from the waves sound like delight broke forth,
Harmonizing with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts aerial merriment.
So, as we rode, we talked ; and the swift thought,
Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,
30 But flew from brain to brain. Such glee was ours,
Charged with light memories of remembered hours,
None slow enough for sadness ; till we came
Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.
This day had been cheerful but cold ; and now
The sun was sinking, and the wind also.
Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be
Talk interrupted with such raillery
As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn
The thoughts it would extinguish :—'twas forlorn,
40 Yet pleasing ; such as once, so poets tell,
The devils held within the dales of hell,
Concerning God, freewill, and destiny.

Of all that Earth has been, or yet may be,
 All that vain men imagine or believe,
 Or hope can paint or suffering may achieve,
 We descanted ; and I (for ever still
 Is it not wise to make the best of ill ?)
 Argued against despondency ; but pride
 Made my companion take the darker side.
 56 The sense that he was greater than his kind
 Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
 By gazing on its own exceeding light.

Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight
 Over the horizon of the mountains. Oh,
 How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
 Of heaven descends upon a land like thee,
 Thou paradise of exiles, Italy,
 Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers
 Of cities they encircle !—It was ours
 60 To stand on thee, beholding it : and then,
 Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
 Were waiting for us with the gondola.
 As those who pause on some delightful way,
 Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood
 Looking upon the evening, and the flood
 Which lay between the city and the shore,
 Paved with the image of the sky. The hoar
 And aery Alps, towards the north, appeared
 Through mist—an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared
 70 Between the east and west ; and half the sky
 Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry,
 Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
 Down the steep west into a wondrous hue
 Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
 Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
 Among the many-folded hills. They were
 Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
 As seen from Lido through the harbour-piles,
 The likeness of a clump of peaked isles.
 80 And then, as if the earth and sea had been
 Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
 Those mountains towering, as from waves of flame,
 Around the vaporous sun ; from which there came

*Actual
 below*

The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent.

"Ere it fade,"

Said my companion, "I will show you soon
A better station."

So, o'er the lagune

90 We glided ; and from that funereal bark
I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to heaven.
I was about to speak, when—

"We are even

Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,—
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.

"Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well

100 If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."

I looked, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island, such a one
As age to age might add, for uses vile,—
A windowless, deformed, and dreary pile ;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung,—
We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue :
The broad sun sunk behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief.

110 "What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry-tower,"
Said Maddalo ; "and ever at this hour
Those who may cross the water hear that bell,
Which calls the maniacs, each one from his cell,
To vespers."

"As much skill as need to pray
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they
To their stern Maker," I replied.

"Oho !

120 "You talk as in years past," said Maddalo.
"Tis strange men change not. You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs. If you can't swim,
Beware of providence !" I looked on him,

But the gay smile had faded in his eye.
 "And such," he cried, "is our mortality !
 And this must be the emblem and the sign
 Of what should be eternal and divine ;
 And, like that black and dreary bell, the soul,
 Hung in a heaven-illumined tower, must toll
 Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
 Round the rent heart, and pray—as madmen do
 For what ? they know not, till the night of death,
 As sunset that strange vision, severeth
 Our memory from itself, and us from all
 We sought, and yet were baffled."

I recall

The sense of what he said, although I mar
 The force of his expressions. The broad star
 Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill ;
 And the black bell became invisible ;
 And the red tower looked grey ; and all between,
 The churches, ships, and palaces, were seen
 Huddled in gloom ; into the purple sea
 The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.
 We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola
 Conveyed me to my lodgings by the way.

The following morn was rainy, cold, and dim.
 Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him ;
 And, whilst I waited, with his child I played.
 A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made ;
 A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being ;
 Graceful without design, and unforeseeing ;
 With eyes—oh speak not of her eyes ! which seem
 Twin mirrors of Italian heaven, yet gleam
 With such deep meaning as we never see
 But in the human countenance. With me
 She was a special favourite : I had nursed
 Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first
 To this bleak world ; and she yet seemed to know
 On second sight her ancient playfellow,
 Less changed than she was by six months or so.
 For, after her first shyness was worn out,
 We sate there, rolling billiard-balls about,—
 When the Count entered.

Salutations past :

"The words you spoke last night might well have cast
A darkness on my spirit. If man be

The passive thing you say, I should not see

170 Much harm in the religions and old saws
(Though *I* may never own such leaden laws)

Which break a teachless nature to the yoke :

Mine is another faith."—Thus much I spoke,

And, noting he replied not, added—"See

This lovely child ; blithe, innocent, and free :

She spends a happy time, with little care ;

While we to such sick thoughts subjected are

As came on you last night. It is our will

Which thus enchains us to permitted ill.

180 We might be otherwise ; we might be all

We dream of, happy, high, majestic.

Where is the beauty, love, and truth, we seek,

But in our minds ? And, if we were not weak,

Should we be less in deed than in desire ?"

"Ay, *if* we were not weak,—and we aspire,

How vainly ! to be strong," said Maddalo :

"You talk Utopia."

"It remains to know,"

I then rejoined ; "and those who try may find

190 How strong the chains are which our spirit bind :

Brittle perchance as straw. We are assured

Much may be conquered, much may be endured,

Of what degrades and crushes us. We know

That we have power over ourselves to do

And suffer—*what* we know not till we try,

But something nobler than to live and die.

So taught those kings of old philosophy

Who reigned before religion made men blind ;

And those who suffer with their suffering kind

200 Yet feel their faith Religion."

"My dear friend,"

Said Maddalo, "my judgment will not bend

To your opinion, though I think you might

Make such a system refutation-tight,

As far as words go. I knew one like you,

Who to this city came some months ago,

With whom I argued in this sort,—and he

Is now gone mad—and so he answered me,
 Poor fellow !—But, if you would like to go,
 No We'll visit him, and his wild talk will show
 How vain are such aspiring theories."

Indomitable Optimism

"I hope to prove the induction otherwise,
 And that a want of that true theory still
 Which seeks a soul of goodness in things ill,
 Or in himself or others, has thus bowed
 His being. There are some by nature proud,
 Who, patient in all else, demand but this—
 To love and be beloved with gentleness :
 And, being scorned, what wonder if they die
 No Some living death? This is not destiny,
 But man's own wilful ill."

As thus I spoke,
 Servants announced the gondola, and we
 Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
 Sailed to the island where the madhouse stands.
 We disembarked. The clap of tortured hands,
 Fierce yells, and howlings, and lamentings keen,
 And laughter where complaint had merrier been,
 Moans, shrieks, and curses, and blaspheming prayers,
 No Accosted us. We climbed the oozy stairs
 Into an old courtyard. I heard on high
 The fragments of most touching melody ;
 But, looking up, saw not the singer there.
 Through the black bars, in the tempestuous air,
 I saw, like weeds on a wrecked palace growing,
 Long tangled locks, flung wildly forth and flowing,
 Of those who on a sudden were beguiled
 Into strange silence, and looked forth and smiled,
 Hearing sweet sounds. Then I :

No "Methinks there were
 A cure of these with patience and kind care,
 If music can thus move. But what is he
 Whom we seek here?"

"Of his sad history
 I know but this," said Maddalo. "He came
 To Venice a dejected man, and fame
 Said he was wealthy, or he had been so :
 Some thought the loss of fortune wrought him woe.

But he was ever talking in such sort

As you do,—far more sadly ; he seemed hurt,
 Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,
 To hear but of the oppression of the strong,
 Or those absurd deceits (I think with you
 In some respects, you know) which carry through
 The excellent impostors of this earth,
 When they outface detection. He had worth,
 Poor fellow, but a humourist in his way."

"Alas ! what drove him mad ?"

"I cannot say :

A lady came with him from France ; and when
 She left him and returned, he wandered then
 About yon lonely isles of desert sand,
 Till he grew wild. He had no cash or land
 Remaining. The police had brought him here :
 Some fancy took him, and he would not bear
 Removal. So I fitted up for him
 These rooms beside the sea, to please his whim ;
 And sent him busts, and books, and urns for flowers,
 Which had adorned his life in happier hours,
 And instruments of music. You may guess
 A stranger could do little more, or less,
 For one so gentle and unfortunate :
 And those are his sweet strains which charm the weight
 From madmen's chains, and make this hell appear
 A heaven of sacred silence hushed to hear."

"Nay, this was kind of you,—he had no claim,
 As the world says."

"None—but the very same

Which I on all mankind, were I, as he,
 Fallen to such deep reverse. His melody
 Is interrupted now : we hear the din
 Of madmen, shriek on shriek, again begin.
 Let us now visit him : after this strain,
 He ever communes with himself again,
 And sees nor hears not any."

Having said

These words, we called the keeper, and he led
 To an apartment opening on the sea.
 There the poor wretch was sitting mournfully

- 240 Near a piano, his pale fingers twined
 One with the other ; and the ooze and wind
 Rushed through an open casement, and did sway
 His hair, and starred it with the brackish spray.
 His head was leaning on a music-book,
 And he was muttering, and his lean limbs shook.
 His lips were pressed against a folded leaf,
 In hue too beautiful for health ; and grief
 Smiled in their motions as they lay apart.
 As one who wrought from his own fervid heart
 260 The eloquence of passion, soon he raised
 His sad meek face, and eyes lustrous and glazed,
 And spoke,—sometimes as one who wrote, and thought
 His words might move some heart that heeded not,
 If sent to distant lands ; and then as one
 Reproaching deeds never to be undone,
 With wondering self-compassion. Then his speech
 Was lost in grief, and then his words came each
 Unmodulated, cold, expressionless,—
 But that from one jarred accent you might guess
 280 It was despair made them so uniform.
 And all the while the loud and gusty storm
 Hissed through the window ;—and we stood behind,
 Stealing his accents from the envious wind,
 Unseen. I yet remember what he said
 Distinctly, such impression his words made.

 “Month after month,” he cried, “to bear this load !
 And, as a jade urged by the whip and goad,
 To drag life on—which like a heavy chain
 Lengthens behind with many a link of pain !
 300 And not to speak my grief—oh not to dare
 To give a human voice to my despair !
 But live, and move, and, wretched thing ! smile on,
 As if I never went aside to groan,—
 And wear this mask of falsehood even to those
 Who are most dear, not for my own repose—
 Alas ! no scorn or pain or hate could be
 So heavy as that falsehood is to me—
 But that I cannot bear more altered faces
 Than needs must be, more changed and cold embraces,
 320 More misery, disappointment, and mistrust,

To own me for their father. Would the dust
 Were covered in upon my body now—
 That the life ceased to toil within my brow !
 And then these thoughts would at the least be fled ;
 Let us not fear such pain can vex the dead.

“What power delights to torture us ? I know
 That to myself I do not wholly owe
 What now I suffer, though in part I may.
 Alas ! none strewed sweet flowers upon the way
 Where, wandering heedlessly, I met pale Pain,
 My shadow, which will leave me not again.
 If I have erred, there was no joy in error,
 But pain and insult and unrest and terror.
 I have not, as some do, bought penitence
 With pleasure and a dark yet sweet offence ;
 For then, if love and tenderness and truth
 Had overlived hope’s momentary youth,
 My creed should have redeemed me from repenting.
 But loathed scorn and outrage unrelenting

Met love, excited by far other seeming,
 Until the end was gained :—as one from dreaming
 Of sweetest peace, I woke, and found my state
 Such as it is !—

“O thou, my spirit’s mate !

Who, for thou art compassionate and wise,
 Wouldst pity me from thy most gentle eyes
 If this sad writing thou shouldst ever see,
 My secret groans must be unheard by thee ;
 Thou wouldst weep tears bitter as blood, to know
 Thy lost friend’s incommunicable woe.
 Ye few by whom my nature has been weighed
 In friendship, let me not that name degrade
 By placing on your hearts the secret load
 Which crushes mine to dust. There is one road
 To peace,—and that is truth, which follow ye :
 Love sometimes leads astray to misery.
 Yet think not, though subdued (and I may well
 Say that I am subdued), that the full hell
 Within me would infect the untainted breast
 Of sacred Nature with its own unrest ;
 As some perverted beings think to find

In scorn or hate a medicine for the mind
 Which scorn or hate hath wounded :—oh how vain !
 The dagger heals not, but may rend again.
 Believe that I am ever still the same
 In creed as in resolve ; and what may tame
 My heart must leave the understanding free,
 Or all would sink in this keen agony.
 Nor dream that I will join the vulgar cry,

240 Or with my silence sanction tyranny ;
 Or seek a moment's shelter from my pain
 In any madness which the world calls gain,
 Ambition, or revenge, or thoughts as stern
 As those which make me what I am ; or turn
 To avarice or misanthropy or lust.
 Heap on me soon, O grave, thy welcome dust !
 Till then the dungeon may demand its prey ;
 And Poverty and Shame may meet and say,
 Halting beside me on the public way,

246 That love-devoted youth is ours : let's sit
 Beside him : he may live some six months yet.
 Or the red scaffold, as our country bends,
 May ask some willing victim ; or ye, friends,
 May fall under some sorrow, which this heart
 Or hand may share or vanquish or avert.
 I am prepared—in truth, with no proud joy—
 To do or suffer aught ; as when, a boy,
 I did devote to justice and to love
 My nature, worthless now.

400 " I must remove
 A veil from my pent mind. 'Tis torn aside !
 Oh pallid as Death's dedicated bride,
 Thou mockery which art sitting by my side,
 Am I not wan like thee ? At the grave's call
 I haste, invited to thy wedding-ball,
 To greet the ghastly paramour for whom
 Thou hast deserted me, and made the tomb
 Thy bridal-bed. But I beside your feet
 Will lie, and watch ye from my winding-sheet
 410 Thus—wide awake though dead.—Yet stay, oh stay !
 Go not so soon !—I know not what I say—
 Hear but my reasons !—I am mad, I fear,
 My fancy is o'erwrought.—Thou art not here !

Pale art thou, 'tis most true—— But thou art gone—
Thy work is finished ; I am left alone.

“ Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast,
Which like a serpent thou envenomest
As in repayment of the warmth it lent ?
Didst thou not seek me for thine own content ?
Did not thy love awaken mine ? I thought
That thou wert she who said, ‘ You kiss me not
Ever ; I fear you do not love me now.’
In truth I loved even to my overthrow
Her who would fain forget these words,—but they
Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away.

“ You say that I am proud ; that, when I speak,
My lip is tortured with the wrongs which break
The spirit it expresses.—Never one
Humbled himself before as I have done.
Even the instinctive worm on which we tread
Turns, though it wound not—then with prostrate head
Sinks in the dust, and writhes like me—and dies ?
No, wears a living death of agonies.
As the slow shadows of the pointed grass
Mark the eternal periods, his pangs pass,
Slow, ever-moving, making moments be
As mine seem—each an immortality !

“ That you had never seen me—never heard
My voice—and more than all had ne’er endured
The deep pollution of my loathed embrace—
That your eyes ne’er had lied love in my face—
That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out
The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root
With mine own quivering fingers, so that ne’er
Our hearts had for a moment mingled there,
To disunite in horror—these were not,
With thee, like some suppressed and hideous thought,
Which flits athwart our musings, but can find
No rest within a pure and gentle mind :
Thou sealedst them with many a bare broad word,
And sear’dst my memory o’er them,—for I heard

And can forget not ;—they were ministered
 One after one, those curses. Mix them up
 Like self-destroying poisons in one cup ;
 And they will make one blessing which thou ne'er
 Didst imprecate for on me——death !

“ It were

A cruel punishment for one most cruel,
 If such can love, to make that love the fuel
 Of the mind's hell—hate, scorn, remorse, despair.
 But *me*, whose heart a stranger's tear might wear
 As water-drops the sandy fountain-stone ;
 Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan
 For woes which others hear not, and could see
 The absent with the glance of fantasy,
 And with the poor and trampled sit and weep,
 Following the captive to his dungeon deep ;
Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
 The else-unfelt oppressions of this earth,

And was to thee the flame upon thy hearth
 When all beside was cold :—that thou on me
 Shouldst rain these plagues of blistering agony !
 Such curses are from lips once eloquent
 With love's too partial praise ! Let none relent
 Who intends deeds too dreadful for a name,
 Henceforth, if an example for the same
 They seek :—for thou on me look'dst so and so,
 And didst speak thus and thus ! I live to show
 How much men bear, and die not.

“ Thou wilt tell,

With the grimace of hate, how horrible
 It was to meet my love when thine grew less ;
 Thou wilt admire how I could e'er address
 Such features to love's work. This taunt, though true
 (For indeed Nature nor in form nor hue
 Bestowed on me her choicest workmanship),
 Shall not be thy defence : for, since thy lip
 Met mine first, years long past—since thine eye kindled
 With soft fire under mine,—I have not dwindled,
 Nor changed in mind or body, or in aught,
 But as love changes what it loveth not
 After long years and many trials.

"How vain

Are words ! I thought never to speak again,
Not even in secret, not to my own heart—
But from my lips the unwilling accents start,
And from my pen the words flow,—as I write,
Dazzling my eyes with scalding tears. My sight
Is dim to see that charactered in vain

500 On this unfeeling leaf which burns the brain
And eats into it, blotting all things fair
And wise and good which Time had written there.

Those who inflict must suffer ; for they see
The work of their own hearts, and this must be
Our chastisement or recompense.—O child !
I would that thine were like to be more mild,
For both our wretched sakes,—for thine the most,
Who feel'st already all that thou hast lost,
Without the power to wish it thine again.

510 And, as slow years pass, a funereal train,
Each with the ghost of some lost hope or friend
Following it like its shadow, wilt thou bend
No thought on my dead memory ? . . .

"Alas, love !

Fear me not : against thee I would not move
A finger in despite. Do I not live
That thou mayst have less bitter cause to grieve ?
I give thee tears for scorn, and love for hate ;
And, that thy lot may be less desolate

520 Than his on whom thou tramplest, I refrain
From that sweet sleep which medicines all pain.
Then—when thou speakest of me—never say
'He could forgive not.'—Here I cast away
All human passions, all revenge, all pride ;
I think, speak, act, no ill ; I do but hide
Under these words, like embers, every spark
Of that which has consumed me. Quick and dark
The grave is yawning :—as its roof shall cover
My limbs with dust and worms, under and over,
530 So let oblivion hide this grief.—The air
Closes upon my accents, as despair
Upon my heart—let death upon despair !"

He ceased, and overcome leant back awhile ;
 Then rising, with a melancholy smile,
 Went to a sofa, and lay down, and slept
 A heavy sleep ; and in his dreams he wept,
 And muttered some familiar name, and we
 Wept without shame in his society.
 I think I never was impressed so much :

540 The man who were not must have lacked a touch
 Of human nature.

Then we lingered not,
 Although our argument was quite forgot ;
 But, calling the attendants, went to dine
 At Maddalo's. Yet neither cheer nor wine
 Could give us spirits ; for we talked of him,
 And nothing else, till daylight made stars dim.
 And we agreed his was some dreadful ill
 Wrought on him boldly, yet unspeakable,

550 By a dear friend ; some deadly change in love
 Of one vowed deeply (which he dreamed not of),
 For whose sake he, it seemed, had fixed a blot
 Of falsehood on his mind, which flourished not
 But in the light of all-beholding truth ;
 And, having stamped this canker on his youth,
 She had abandoned him. And how much more
 Might be his woe we guessed not. He had store
 Of friends and fortune once, as we could guess
 From his nice habits and his gentleness ;

560 These were now lost ; it were a grief indeed
 If he had changed one unsustaining reed
 For all that such a man might else adorn.
 The colours of his mind seemed yet unworn ;
 For the wild language of his grief was high—
 Such as in measure were called poetry.
 And I remember one remark which then
 Maddalo made: he said—" Most wretched men
 Are cradled into poetry by wrong :
 They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

570 If I had been an unconnected man,
 I, from this moment, should have formed some plan
 Never to leave sweet Venice. For to me
 It was delight to ride by the lone sea :

And then the town is silent—one may write
Or read in gondolas, by day or night,
Having the little brazen lamp alight,
Unseen, uninterrupted. Books are there,
Pictures, and casts from all those statues fair
Which were twin-born with poetry, and all

580 We seek in towns, with little to recall
Regrets for the green country. I might sit
In Maddalo's great palace, and his wit
And subtle talk would cheer the winter night,
And make me know myself: and the firelight
Would flash upon our faces, till the day
Might dawn, and make me wonder at my stay.
But I had friends in London too. The chief
Attraction here was that I sought relief
From the deep tenderness that maniac wrought

590 Within me. 'Twas perhaps an idle thought,
But I imagined that—if day by day
I watched him, and but seldom went away,
And studied all the beatings of his heart
With zeal (as men study some stubborn art
For their own good), and could by patience find
An entrance to the caverns of his mind—
I might reclaim him from this dark estate.
In friendships I had been most fortunate ;
Yet never saw I one whom I would call

600 More willingly my friend.—And this was all
Accomplished not. Such dreams of baseless good
Oft come and go, in crowds or solitude,
And leave no trace: but what I now designed
Made, for long years, impression on my mind.—
The following morning, urged by my affairs,
I left bright Venice.

After many years
And many changes, I returned. The name
Of Venice, and its aspect, was the same.
610 But Maddalo was travelling, far away,
Among the mountains of Armenia :
His dog was dead: his child had now become
A woman, such as it has been my doom
To meet with few; a wonder of this earth
Where there is little of transcendent worth,—

presence of own affairs
prevented I to from putting
his theory to the test

its corollary, that
is largely a condition
of mind which will
be vanquished by
exercise of will

it's with more
hope

Like one of Shakespeare's women. Kindly she,
 And with a manner beyond courtesy,
 Received her father's friend ; and, when I asked
 Of the lorn maniac, she her memory tasked,
 And told, as she had heard, the mournful tale :—
 That the poor sufferer's health began to fail
 Two years from my departure ; but that then
 The lady who had left him came again.
 " Her mien had been imperious, but she now
 Looked meek ; perhaps remorse had brought her low.
 Her coming made him better ; and they stayed
 Together at my father's—(for I played,
 As I remember, with the lady's shawl ;
 I might be six years old).—But, after all,
 She left him."

" Why, her heart must have been tough !
 How did it end ? "

" And was not this enough ?
 They met, they parted."

" Child, is there no more ? "

" Something within that interval which bore
 The stamp of *why* they parted, *how* they met.—
 Yet, if thine aged eyes disdain to wet
 Those wrinkled cheeks with youth's remembered tears,
 Ask me no more ; but let the silent years
 Be closed and cased over their memory,—
 As yon mute marble where their corpses lie."

I urged and questioned still. She told me how
 All happened—But the cold world shall not know.

NOTE ON JULIAN AND MADDALO, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

From the Baths of Lucca, in 1818, Shelley visited Venice ; and, circumstances rendering it eligible that we should remain a few weeks in the neighbourhood of that city, he accepted the offer of Lord Byron, who lent him the use of a villa he rented near Este ; and he sent for his family from Lucca to join him.

I Capuccini was a villa built on the site of a Capuchin convent, demolished when the French suppressed religious houses ; it was situated on the very overhanging brow of a low hill at the foot of a range of higher ones. The house was cheerful and pleasant ; a vine-trellised walk (a *pergola*, as it is called in Italian) led from the hall door to a summer-house at the end of the garden, which Shelley made his study, and in which he began the *Prometheus* ; and here also, as he mentions in a letter, he wrote *Julian and Maddalo*. A slight ravine, with a road in its depth, divided the garden from the hill, on which stood the ruins of the ancient castle of Este, whose dark massive wall gave forth an echo, and from whose ruined crevices owls and bats flitted forth at night, as the crescent moon sunk behind the black and heavy battlements. We looked from the garden over the wide plain of Lombardy, bounded to the west by the far Apennines, while to the east the horizon was lost in misty distance. After the picturesque but limited view of mountain, ravine, and chestnut-wood, at the Baths of Lucca, there was something infinitely gratifying to the eye in the wide range of prospect commanded by our new abode.

Our first misfortune, of the kind from which we soon suffered even more severely, happened here. Our little girl, an infant in whose small features I fancied that I traced great resemblance to her father, showed symptoms of suffering from the heat of the climate. Teething increased her illness and danger. We were at Este, and, when we became alarmed, hastened to Venice for the best advice. When we arrived at Fusina, we found that we had forgotten our passport, and the soldiers on duty attempted to prevent our crossing the laguna ; but they could not resist Shelley's impetuosity at such a moment. We had scarcely arrived at Venice before life fled from the little sufferer, and we returned to Este to weep her loss.

After a few weeks spent in this retreat, which were interspersed by visits to Venice, we proceeded southward.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

A LYRICAL DRAMA, IN FOUR ACTS.

Audisne hæc, Amphiaræ, sub terram abdite ?

PREFACE.

THE Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation, or to imitate in story, as in title, their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar license. The *Prometheus Unbound* of Æschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus ; and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Æschylus ; an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language, and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus is Satan : and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement, which, in the Hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry, which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling, it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever-winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening of Spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind : Dante

indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power ; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition ; for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit, of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate : because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same ; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakespeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit : the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold inquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition, or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in Nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them : one great poet is a masterpiece of Nature which another not only ought to study, but *must* study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest ; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural, and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers : he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of Nature and art ; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness ; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets—not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians — are in one sense the creators, and in another the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Æschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between

Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms "a passion for reforming the world:" what passion incited him to write and publish his book he omits to explain. For my part, I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon than go to heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that, until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life, which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose—that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society—let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take *Æschylus* rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them. If his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts: the pile they raise will betray his grave, which might otherwise have been unknown.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PROMETHEUS.
 DEMOGORGON.
 JUPITER.
 The EARTH.
 OCEAN.
 APOLLO.
 MERCURY.
 HERCULES.

ASIA,	}	<i>Oceanides.</i>
PANTHEA,		
IONE.		
The PHANTASM OF JUPITER.		
The SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.		
The SPIRIT OF THE MOON.		
SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.		
SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAUNS.		
FURIES.		

ACT I.

SCENE—*A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus. PROMETHEUS is discovered bound to the Precipice. PANTHEA and IONE are seated at his feet. Time, Night. During the Scene, Morning slowly breaks.*

Prometheus. Monarch of Gods and Dæmons, and all Spirits—
 But One—who throng those bright and rolling worlds
 Which thou and I alone of living things
 Behold with sleepless eyes ! regard this earth
 Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
 Requistest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
 And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
 With fear and self-contempt and barren hope :
 Whilst me who am thy foe, eyeless in hate
 Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
 O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
 Three-thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
 And moments aye divided by keen pangs
 Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
 Scorn and despair—these are mine empire :—
 More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
 From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God !—
 Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
 Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
 Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
 Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured ; without herb,
 Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
 Ah me ! alas ! pain, pain, ever, for ever !

No change, no pause, no hope ! Yet I endure.
 I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt ?
 I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,

Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing shadow spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas! pain, pain, ever, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals; the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones;
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of Dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The Genii of the Storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night;
Whether one breaks the hoar-frost of the morn,
Or, starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
The wingless crawling Hours, one among whom
—As some dark priest hales the reluctant victim—
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through the wide heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation; for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voicèd Echoes through the mist
Of cataracts flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India! thou serenest Air,
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds who on poisèd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,

As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbèd world ! if then my words had power,—
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within, although no memory be
Of what is hate,—let them not lose it now !
What was that curse ? for ye all heard me speak.

FIRST VOICE, *from the Mountains.*

Thrice three hundred thousand years
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood :
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
We trembled in our multitude :—

SECOND VOICE, *from the Springs.*

Thunderbolts had parched our water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, mid shrieks of slaughter,
Through a city and a solitude :—

THIRD VOICE, *from the Air.*

I had clothed since Earth uprose
Its wastes in colours not their own ;
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan :—

FOURTH VOICE, *from the Whirlwinds.*

We had soared beneath these mountains
Unresting ages ; nor had thunder,
Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under,
Ever made us mute with wonder :—

FIRST VOICE.

But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

SECOND VOICE.

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried " Ah woe is me !"
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

THIRD VOICE.

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven :

When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the day like blood.

FOURTH VOICE.

And we shrank back : for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—
Though silence is a hell to us.

The Earth. The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried "Misery !" then ; the hollow Heaven replied
"Misery !" and the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
And the pale nations heard it, "Misery !"

Prometheus. I hear a sound of voices : not the voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove
Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
Thé Titan ? he who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering Foe ?
O rock-embosomed lawns and snow-fed streams,
Now seen athwart froze vapours, deep below,
Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes ;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye now
To commune with me ? me alone who checked,
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses.
Why answer ye not still, Brethren ?

The Earth.

They dare not.

Prometheus. Who dares ? for I would hear that curse again. —
Ha ! what an awful whisper rises up !
'Tis scarce like sound : it tingles through the frame
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.
Speak, Spirit ! From thine inorganic voice,
I only know that thou art moving near,
And love. How cursed I him ?

The Earth.

How canst thou hear,
Who knowest not the language of the dead ?

Prometheus. Thou art a living spirit ; speak as they.

The Earth. I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art and good ; and, though the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God,
Being wise and kind : earnestly hearken now.

Prometheus. Obscurely through my brain, like shadows dim
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love ;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

The Earth. No, thou canst not hear :
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die.

Prometheus. And what art thou,
O melancholy Voice ?

The Earth. I am the Earth,
'Thy mother ; she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom like a cloud
Of glory arise,—a spirit of keen joy !
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust ;
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread
Grew pale,—until his thunder chained thee here.
Then—see those million worlds which burn and roll
Around us—their inhabitants beheld
My spherèd light wane in wide heaven ; the sea
Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath heaven's frown ;
Lightning and inundation vexed the plains ;
Blue thistles bloomed in cities, foodless toads
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled ;
When Plague had fallen on man and beast and worm,
And Famine ; and black blight on herb and tree ;
And in the corn and vines and meadow-grass
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds,
Draining their growth,—for my wan breast was dry
With grief ; and the thin air, my breath, was stained

With the contagion of a mother's hate
 Breathed on her child's destroyer. Ay, I heard
 Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
 Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
 Mountains and caves and winds, and yon wide air,
 And the inarticulate people of the dead,
 Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
 In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
 But dare not speak them.

Prometheus.

Venerable Mother !

All else who live and suffer take from thee
 Some comfort—flowers and fruits and happy sounds,
 And love, though fleeting : these may not be mine.
 But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

The Earth. They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,
 The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
 Met his own image walking in the garden :
 That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
 For know, there are two worlds of life and death :—
 One, that which thou beholdest ; but the other
 Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
 The shadows of all forms that think and live,
 Till death unite them and they part no more ;
 Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
 And all that faith creates or love desires,
 Terrible, strange, sublime, and beauteous shapes.
 There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
 Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains. All the Gods
 Are there ; and all the Powers of nameless worlds—
 Vast, sceptred phantoms ; heroes, men, and beasts ;
 And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom ;
 And he, the Supreme Tyrant, on his throne
 Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
 The curse which all remember. Call at will
 Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
 Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Gods
 From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin,
 Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.
 Ask, and they must reply : so the revenge
 Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades,
 As rainy wind through the abandoned gate
 Of a fallen palace.

Prometheus. Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear !

IONE.

My wings are folded o'er mine ears :
My wings are crossèd o'er mine eyes :
Yet through their silver shade appears,
And through their lulling plumes arise,
A Shape, a throng of sounds.
May it be no ill to thee
O thou of many wounds,
Near whom, for our sweet Sister's sake,
Ever thus we watch and wake !

PANTHEA.

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven !
The shape is awful like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
A sceptre of pale gold,
To stay steps proud o'er the slow cloud,
His veinèd hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers, wrong.

Phantasm of Jupiter. Why have the secret powers of this
strange world
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
On direst storms ? What unaccustomed sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness ? And, proud sufferer, who art thou ?

Prometheus. Tremendous Image ! as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

The Earth. Listen ! and, though your echoes must be mute
Grey mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,
Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak !

Phantasm. A spirit seizes me and speaks within :
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

Panthea. See how he lifts his mighty looks ! the heaven
Darkens above !

Ione. He speaks ! Oh shelter me !

Prometheus. I see the curse, on gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,
Written as on a scroll. Yet speak ! oh speak !

PHANTASM.

“ Fiend, I defy thee ! with a calm fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do ;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Humankind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue !
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease and frenzying fear ;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms
Of Furies driving by upon the wounding storms.

“ Ay, do thy worst ! Thou art omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind from yon ethereal tower.
Let thy malignant spirit move
In darkness over those I love :
On me and mine I imprecate
The utmost torture of thy hate ;
And thus devote to sleepless agony
This undeclining head while thou must reign on high.

“ But thou, who art the God and Lord ! O thou
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of earth and heaven do bow
In fear and worship, all-prevailing foe !
I curse thee ! Let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse !
Till thine infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony ;
And thine omnipotence a crown of pain,
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain !

"Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this curse,
 Ill deeds,—then be thou damned, beholding good :
 Both infinite as is the universe,
 And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude !
 An awful image of calm Power
 Though now thou sittest, let the hour
 Come when thou must appear to be
 That which thou art internally :
 And, after many a false and fruitless crime,
 Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space and time !"

Prometheus. Were these my words, O Parent ?

The Earth. They were thine.

Prometheus. It doth repent me : words are quick and vain :
 Grief for a while is blind, and so was mine.

I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

THE EARTH.

Misery, oh misery to me,
 That Jove at length should vanquish thee !
 Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,—
 The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye !
 Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead !
 Your refuge, your defence, lies fallen and vanquishèd !

FIRST ECHO.

Lies fallen and vanquishèd ?

SECOND ECHO.

Fallen and vanquishèd !

IONE.

Fear not : 'tis but some passing spasm,—
 The Titan is unvanquished still.—
 But see where through the azure chasm
 Of yon forked and snowy hill,
 Trampling the slant winds on high
 With golden-sandalled feet that glow
 Under plumes of purple dye
 Like rose-ensanguined ivory,
 A Shape comes now,
 Stretching on high from his right hand
 A serpent-cinctured wand.

PANTHEA.

'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury.

IONE.

And who are those with hydra tresses
And iron wings that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses,—
Like vapours steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd?

PANTHEA.

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood
When, charioted on sulphurous cloud,
He bursts heaven's bounds.

IONE.

Are they now led from the thin dead,
On new pangs to be fed?

PANTHEA.

The Titan looks, as ever, firm, not proud.

First Fury. Ha ! I scent life !

Second Fury. Let me but look into his eyes !

Third Fury. The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses to a death-bird after battle !

First Fury. Dar'st thou delay, O Herald ! Take cheer,
Hounds

Of Hell ! What if the Son of Maia soon
Should make us food and sport ?—Who can please long
The Omnipotent ?

Mercury. Back to your towers of iron,
And gnash, beside the streams of fire and wail,
Your foodless teeth !—Geryon, arise ! and Gorgon,
Chimæra, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends,
Who ministered to Thebes heaven's poisoned wine—
Unnatural love and more unnatural hate !—
These shall perform your task.

First Fury. Oh mercy ! mercy !

We die with our desire : drive us not back !

Mercury. Crouch then in silence.

Awful Sufferer !

To thee unwilling, most unwillingly

I come, by the Great Father's will driven down,

To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas ! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more. Aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season heaven seems hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm, and good,
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent ; as yon clear lamps
That measure and divide the weary years,
From which there is no refuge, long have taught,
And long must teach. Even now thy torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in hell ;
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the abyss, and leave them to their task.
Be it not so ! There is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme ;—
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession ; bend thy soul in prayer,
And, like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart :
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.

Prometheus. Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has ; and in return he chains me here,
Years, ages, night and day ; whether the sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-wingèd snow cling round my hair ;
Whilst my beloved race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrant's recompense. 'Tis just :
He who is evil can receive no good ;
And for a world bestowed or a friend lost
He can feel hate, fear, shame ; not gratitude.
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission thou dost know I cannot try ;
For what submission but that fatal word,

The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
 Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword
 Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
 Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield.
 Let others flatter Crime where it sits throned
 In brief omnipotence! Secure are they:
 For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
 Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
 Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
 Enduring thus, the retributive hour
 Which since we spake is even nearer now.
 But hark, the Hell-hounds clamour. Fear delay!
 Behold! heaven lours under thy father's frown!

Mercury. Oh that we might be spared—I to inflict,
 And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:
 Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?

Prometheus. I know but this, that it must come.

Mercury. Alas!

Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain? [less

Prometheus. They last while Jove must reign; nor more nor
 Do I desire or fear.

Mercury. Yet pause, and plunge
 Into eternity, where recorded time—
 Even all that we imagine, age on age—
 Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
 Flags wearily in its unending flight,
 Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless.
 Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
 Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved?

Prometheus. Perchance no thought can count them. Yet
 they pass.

Mercury. If thou mightst dwell among the Gods the while
 Lapped in voluptuous joy?

Prometheus. I would not quit
 This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.

Mercury. Alas! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

Prometheus. Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,—
 Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,
 As light in the sun, throned. How vain is talk!
 Call up the fiends.

Ione. O sister, look! White fire
 Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar!
 How fearfully God's thunder howls behind!

Mercury. I must obey his words and thine : alas !
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart !

Panthea. See where the child of Heaven, with wingèd feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

Ione. Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes,
Lest thou behold and die. They come, they come,
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath like death !

First Fury.

Prometheus !

Second Fury. Immortal Titan !

Third Fury. Champion of Heaven's slaves !

Prometheus. He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here ;
Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms,
What and who are ye ? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul through monster-teeming hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove.
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.

First Fury. We are the ministers of pain and fear,
And disappointment and mistrust and hate,
And clinging crime ; and, as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep and bleed and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.

Prometheus. O many fearful natures in one name !
I know ye ; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings.
But why more hideous than your loathèd selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep ?

Second Fury. We knew not that. Sisters, rejoice, rejoice !

Prometheus. Can aught exult in its deformity ?

Second Fury. The beauty of delight makes lovers glad,
Gazing on one another : so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The ærial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round,—
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.

Prometheus. I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.

First Fury. Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone,
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within ?

Prometheus. Pain is my element, as hate is thine.
Ye rend me now : I care not.

Second Fury. Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes ?

Prometheus. I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,
Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.

Third Fury. Thou think'st we will live through thee, one
by one,

Like animal life ; and, though we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men ;
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thine astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony.

Prometheus. Why, ye are thus now :
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

CHORUS OF FURIES.

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,

Come, come, come !

O ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth
When cities sink howling in ruin ! and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck,

Come, come, come !

Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,
Strewed beneath a nation dead ;
Leave the hatred, as in ashes

Fire is left for future burning—
It will burst in bloodier flashes

When ye stir it, soon returning :
Leave the self-contempt implanted
In young spirits, sense-enchanted,
Misery's yet unkindled fuel :

Leave Hell's secrets half unchaunted
To the maniac dreamer,—cruel,
More than ye can be with hate,
Is he with fear.

Come, come, come !

We are steaming up from hell's wide gate,
And we burden the blasts of the atmosphere,
But vainly we toil till ye come here !

Ione. Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

Panthea. These solid mountains quiver with the sound,
Even as the tremulous air : their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

FOURTH FURY.

Your call was as a wingèd car
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far.
It rapt us from red gulfs of war ;

FIFTH FURY.

From wide cities famine-wasted ;

SIXTH FURY.

Groans half heard, and blood untasted ;

SEVENTH FURY.

Kingly conclaves, stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold ;

EIGHTH FURY.

From the furnace, white and hot,
In which——

A FURY.

Speak not, whisper not !
I know all that ye would tell,—
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought ;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

A FURY.

Tear the veil !

ANOTHER FURY.

It is torn.

CHORUS.

The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn!
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.
One came forth of gentle worth,
Smiling on the sanguine earth:
His words outlived him, like swift poison
 Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look where round the wide horizon
 Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air!
Mark that outcry of despair!
'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
 Wailing for the faith he kindled.
Look again! the flames almost
 To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:
The survivors round the embers
 Gather in dread.
 Joy, joy, joy!
Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers;
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head!

SEMICHORUS I.

Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.
Grant a little respite now.
See! a disenchanted nation
Springs like day from desolation;
To Truth its state is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;—
A legion'd band of link'd brothers,
Whom Love calls children—

SEMICHORUS II.

'Tis another's!
See how kindred murder kin!
'Tis the vintage-time for Death and Sin.

Blood, like new wine, bubbles within :
Till despair smothers
The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.

[*All the FURIES vanish, except one.*]

Ione. Hark, sister ! what a low yet dreadful groan,
Quite unsuppressed, is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,
And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves !
Dar'st thou observe how the fiends torture him ?

Panthea. Alas ! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

Ione. What didst thou see ?

Panthea. A woful sight : a youth
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

Ione. What next ?

Panthea. The heaven around, the earth below,
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands :
And some appeared the work of human hearts,
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles.
And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth : those groans are grief enough.

Fury. Behold an emblem : those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.

Prometheus. Remit the anguish of that lighted stare ;
Close those wan lips ; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood ; it mingles with thy tears !
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,—
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore !
Oh horrible ! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse ! I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home,—
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind ;
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells ;
Some—hear I not the multitude laugh loud ?—
Impaled in lingering fire : and mighty realms
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,

Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes.

Fury. Blood thou canst see, and fire ; and canst hear groans :—
Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.

Prometheus. Worse ?

Fury. In each human heart terror survives
The ravin it has gorged. The loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true :
Hypocrisy and Custom make their minds
The fanes of many a worship now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate,
And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power but to weep barren tears :
The powerful goodness want,—worse need for them :
The wise want love : and those who love want wisdom :
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt : they know not what they do.

Prometheus. Thy words are like a cloud of wingèd snakes ;
And yet I pity those they torture not.

Fury. Thou pitiest them ? I speak no more ! [Vanishes

Prometheus. Ah woe ! Ah woe !

Ah woe ! Alas ! pain, pain, ever, for ever !
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illuminated mind,
Thou subtle Tyrant ! Peace is in the grave :
The grave hides all things beautiful and good.
I am a God, and cannot find it *there*,—
Nor would I seek it : for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce king ! not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are.

Panthea. Alas ! what sawest thou ?

Prometheus. There are two woes :
To speak, and to behold :—thou spare me one.
Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords : they
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry ;
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
As with one voice, " Truth, Liberty, and Love !"
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven

Among them : there was strife, deceit, and fear :
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

The Earth. I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed joy
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state,
I bid ascend those subtle and fair Spirits
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding ether. They behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
The future : may they speak comfort to thee !

Panthea. Look, sister, where a troop of Spirits gather
Like flocks of clouds in Spring's delightful weather
Thronging in the blue air !

Ione. And see ! more come,
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
And hark ! is it the music of the pines ?
Is it the lake ? is it the waterfall ?

Panthea. 'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS OF THE MIND.

From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppressed Mortality.
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought :
Be it dim and dank and grey,
Like a storm-extinguished day
Travelled o'er by dying gleams ;
Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene.
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave :
We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Through the boundless element.
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee !

Ione. More yet come, one by one : the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

FIRST SPIRIT.

On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
Mid the darkness upward cast.
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—
"Freedom ! Hope ! Death ! Victory !"
Till they faded through the sky.
And one sound, above, around,
One sound, beneath, around, above,
Was moving ; 'twas the soul of Love ;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

SECOND SPIRIT.

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea
Which rocked beneath, immovably ;
And the triumphant storm did flee
(Like a conqueror, swift and proud)
Between,—with many a captive cloud,
A shapeless, dark, and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half.
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh :
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff,
And spread beneath, a hell of death,
O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split ;
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

THIRD SPIRIT.

I sate beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed ;
When a Dream with plumes of flame
To his pillow hovering came.

And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe ;
And the world awhile below
Wore the shade its lustre made.
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet :
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

FOURTH SPIRIT.

On a poet's lips I slept,
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept.
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the ærial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see what things they be :
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality.
One of these awakened me,
And I sped to succour thee.

Ione. Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west
Come ? as two doves to one beloved nest,
Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air,
On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere.
And hark ! their sweet sad voices ! 'tis despair
Mingled with love, and then dissolved in sound.

Panthea. Canst thou speak, sister ? all my words are
drowned.

Ione. Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
On their sustaining wings of skyey grain,
Orange and azure deepening into gold :
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Hast thou beheld the form of Love ?

FIFTH SPIRIT.

As over wide dominions

I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wildernesses,

That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided pinions,

Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses :

His footsteps paved the world with light. But, as I passed, 'twas fading,

And hollow ruin yawned behind : great sages bound in madness, And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished unupbraiding,

Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou, O King of Sadness,

Turn'st by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.¹

SIXTH SPIRIT.

Ah Sister ! Desolation is a delicate thing :

It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,

But treads with killing footstep, and fans with silent wing,

The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear ;

Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above, And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,

Dream visions of aerial joy, and call the monster Love,

And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we greet.

CHORUS.

Though Ruin now Love's shadow be,
Following him destroyingly

On Death's white and wingèd steed
Which the fleetest cannot flee,

Trampling down both flower and weed,
Man and beast, and foul and fair,

Like a tempest through the air ;

Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,

Woundless though in heart or limb.

PROMETHEUS.

Spirits ! how know ye this shall be ?

CHORUS.

In the atmosphere we breathe

(As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee

From Spring gathering up beneath,

Whose mild winds shake the elder-brake,

And the wandering herdsmen know

That the white-thorn soon will blow)
Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd-boys, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

Ione. Where are the Spirits fled?

Panthea. Only a sense
Remains of them ; like the omnipotence
Of music when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute
Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.

Prometheus. How fair these air-born shapes ! And yet I feel
Most vain all hope but love ! And thou art far,
Asia ! who, when my being overflowed,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still. Alas ! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart !
Though I should dream I could even sleep with grief,
If slumber were denied not. I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things.
There is no agony and no solace left ;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment, no more.

Panthea. Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her ?

Prometheus. I said all hope was vain but love : thou lovest.

Panthea. Deeply in truth. But the eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale,
The scene of her sad exile ; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine ;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the ether
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell !

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Morning. A lovely Vale in the Indian Caucasus.**ASIA, alone.*

Asia. From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended !
 Yes, like a spirit, like a thought which makes
 Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
 And beatings haunt the desolated heart
 Which should have learnt repose, thou hast descended,
 Cradled in tempests ; thou dost wake, O Spring !
 O child of many winds ! As suddenly
 Thou comest as the memory of a dream
 Which now is sad because it hath been sweet ;
 Like genius, or like joy, which riseth up
 As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
 The desert of our life.—
 This is the season, this the day, the hour ;
 At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet Sister mine ;
 Too long desired, too long delaying, come !
 How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl !
 The point of one white star is quivering still
 Deep in the orange light of widening morn
 Beyond the purple mountains : through a chasm
 Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
 Reflects it. Now it wanes : it gleams again
 As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
 Of woven cloud unravel in pale air.
 'Tis lost ! and through yon peaks of cloud-like snow
 The roseate sunlight quivers. Hear I not
 The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
 Winnowing the crimson dawn ?

[*PANTHEA enters.*]

I feel, I see,
 Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,
 Like stars half-quenched in mists of silver dew.
 Beloved and most beautiful, who wearest
 The shadow of that soul by which I live,
 How late thou art ! the sphere sun had climbed
 The sea ; my heart was sick with hope, before
 The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

Panthea. Pardon, great Sister ! but my wings were faint
 With the delight of a remembered dream,

As are the noontide plumes of summer winds
Sate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm,
Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy
Unhappy love, had made, through use and pity,
Both love and woe familiar to my heart,
As they had grown to thine. Erewhile I slept
Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,—
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Locked then, as now, behind my dark moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom :
But not as now,—since I am made the wind
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most wordless converse ; since, dissolved
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
Was troubled and yet sweet, my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.

Asia.

Lift up thine eyes,

And let me read thy dream.

Panthea.

As I have said,

With our Sea-sister at his feet I slept.

The mountain-mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
From the keen ice shielding our linkèd sleep.
Then two dreams came. One I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus ; and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within ; and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy :

“ Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me.”
I lifted them. The overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
By love ; which from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire ; an atmosphere
Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,

As the warm ether of the morning sun
 Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
 I saw not, heard not, moved not ; only felt
 His presence flow and mingle through my blood,
 Till it became his life, and his grew mine.
 And I was thus absorbed,—until it passed ;
 And, like the vapours, when the sun sinks down,
 Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
 And tremulous as they, in the deep night
 My being was condensed ; and, as the rays
 Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
 His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
 Like footsteps of weak melody. Thy name,
 Among the many sounds, alone I heard,
 Of what might be articulate ; though still
 I listened through the night when sound was none.
 Ione wakened then, and said to me :
 “ Canst thou divine what troubles me tonight ?
 I always knew what I desired before,
 Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
 But now I cannot tell thee what I seek :
 I know not ; something sweet, since it is sweet
 Even to desire. It is thy sport, false sister ;
 Thou hast discovered some enchantment old,
 Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept,
 And mingled it with thine : for, when just now
 We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
 The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
 Of the life-blood for loss of which I faint
 Quivered between our intertwining arms.”
 I answered not, for the eastern star grew pale,
 But fled to thee.

Asia. Thou speakest, but thy words
 Are as the air : I feel them not. Oh lift
 Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul !

Panthea. I lift them, though they droop beneath the load
 Of that they would express : what canst thou see
 But thine own fairest shadow imaged there ?

Asia. Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
 Contracted to two circles underneath
 Their long fine lashes ; dark, far, measureless,
 Orb within orb and line through line inwoven.

Panthea. Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed?

Asia. There is a change ; beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape : 'tis He, arrayed
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon !
Prometheus, it is thine ! Depart not yet !
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build on the waste world ? The dream is told ! . . .
What shape is that between us ? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick ; yet 'tis a thing of air,
For through its grey robe gleams the golden dew
Whose stars the noon has quenched not.

Dream.

Follow ! Follow !

Panthea. It is mine other dream.

Asia.

It disappears.

Panthea. It passes now into my mind. Methought,
As we sate here, the flower-enfolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree,
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the earth with frost.
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down ;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,
" Oh follow, follow ! "

Asia.

As you speak, your words

Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among the lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young grey dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains,
Shepherded by the slow unwilling wind ;
And the white dew on the new-bladed grass,
Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently.
And there was more which I remember not :
But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
Athwart the purple mountain-slope, was written
" Follow, oh follow ! " As they vanished by,
And on each herb, from which heaven's dew had fallen,
The like was stamped as with a withering fire,
A wind arose among the pines ; it shook

The clinging music from their boughs, and then
 Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
 Were heard : " Oh follow, follow, follow me ! "
 And then I said, " Panthea, look on me " :
 But in the depth of those beloved eyes
 Still I saw " follow, follow ! "

Echo. Follow, follow !

Panthea. The crags, this clear Spring morning, mock our
 voices,
 As they were spirit-tongued.

Asia. It is some being
 Around the crags. What fine clear sounds ! Oh list !

ECHOES (*unseen*).

Echoes we ! Listen !
 We cannot stay,—
 As dew-stars glisten,
 Then fade away—
 Child of Ocean !

Asia. Hark ! Spirits speak ! The liquid responses
 Of their ærial tongues yet sound.

Panthea. I hear.

ECHOES.

Oh follow, follow,
 As our voice recedeth,
 Through the caverns hollow—
 Where the forest spreadeth—
 (*More distant*)
 Oh follow, follow,
 Through the caverns hollow.
 As the song floats thou pursue,
 Where the wild bee never flew ;
 Through the noontide darkness deep,
 By the odour-breathing sleep
 Of faint night-flowers, and the waves
 At the fountain-lighted caves ;
 While our music wild and sweet
 Mocks thy gently falling feet,
 Child of Ocean !

Asia. Shall we pursue the sound ? It grows more faint
 And distant.

Panthea. List! the strain floats nearer now.

ECHOES.

In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken ;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken,
Child of Ocean !

Asia. How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind !

ECHOES.

Oh follow, follow,
Through the caverns hollow !
As the song floats thou pursue ;
By the woodland noontide dew,
By the forests, lakes, and fountains,
Through the many-folded mountains,—
To the rents, and gulfs, and chasms,
Where the Earth reposed from spasms
On the day when He and Thou
Parted, to a commingle now ;
Child of Ocean !

Asia. Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II.—*A Forest, intermingled with Rocks and Caverns.* ASIA
and PANTHEA pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a
Rock, listening.

SEMICHORUS I. OF SPIRITS.

The path through which that lovely twain
Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from heaven's wide blue.
Nor sun nor moon nor wind nor rain
Can pierce its interwoven bowers ;
Nor aught save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel blown anew,
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone.

Or, when some star, of many a one
That climbs and wanders through steep night,
Has found the cleft through which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon,—
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift heavens that cannot stay,—
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite :
And the gloom divine is all around,
And underneath is the mossy ground.

SEMICHORUS II.

There the voluptuous nightingales
Are awake through all the broad noonday.
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
And through the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom ;
Another, from the swinging blossom
Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,—
Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute ;
When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and, rising there
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet that joy is almost pain.

SEMICHORUS I.

There those enchanted eddies play
Of Echoes music-tongued which draw,
By Demogorgon's mighty law,
With melting rapture or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way ;
As inland boats are driven to ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw.
And first there comes a gentle sound
To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined ; soft emotion
Attracts, impels them. Those who saw

Say from the breathing earth behind
 There steams a plume-uplifting wind
 Which drives them on their path, while they
 Believe their own swift wings and feet
 The sweet desires within obey.
 And so they float upon their way,
 Until, still sweet but loud and strong,
 The storm of sound is driven along,
 Sucked up and hurrying : as they fleet
 Behind, its gathering billows meet,
 And to the fatal mountain bear
 Like clouds amid the yielding air.

First Faun. Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
 Which make such delicate music in the woods ?
 We haunt within the least frequented caves
 And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
 Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft :
 Where may they hide themselves ?

Second Faun. 'Tis hard to tell.
 I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,
 The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
 Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
 The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
 Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
 Under the green and golden atmosphere
 Which noontide kindles through the woven leaves ;
 And, when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
 The which they breathed within those lucent domes
 Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,
 They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
 And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
 Under the waters of the earth again.

First Faun. If such live thus, have others other lives,
 Under pink blossoms, or within the bells
 Of meadow-flowers or folded violets deep,
 Or on their dying odours when they die,
 Or in the sunlight of the spherèd dew ?

Second Faun. Ay, many more which we may well divine.—
 But, should we stay to speak, noontide would come,
 And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,
 And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs

Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,
And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
One brotherhood : delightful strains which cheer
Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III.—*A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains.* ASIA
and PANTHEA.

Panthea. Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy—
That maddening wine of life whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication, and uplift,
Like Mænads who cry loud "Evøe ! Evøe !"
The voice which is contagion to the world.

Asia. Fit throne for such a Power ! Magnificent !
How glorious art thou, Earth ! And, if thou be
The shadow of some Spirit lovelier still,—
Though evil stain its work, and it should be
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,—
I could fall down and worship that and thee.
Even now my heart adareth. Wonderful !
Look, Sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain.
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
As a lake, paving, in the morning sky,
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand, midway around,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,
Dim twilight lawns, and stream-illuminated caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist ;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sunlike radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted ocean's dazzling spray,
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.

The vale is girdled with their walls : a howl
 Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines
 Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,
 Awful as silence. Hark ! the rushing snow !
 The sun-awakened avalanche ! whose mass,
 Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
 Flake after flake,—in heaven-defying minds
 As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
 Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
 Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

Panthea. Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
 In crimson foam, even at our feet ! it rises
 As ocean at the enchantment of the moon
 Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.

Asia. The fragments of the cloud are scattered up.
 The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair ;
 Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes ; my brain
 Grows dizzy : I see thin shapes within the mist.

Panthea. A countenance with beckoning smiles : there
 burns
 An azure fire within its golden locks.
 Another, and another ! Hark ! they speak !

SONG OF SPIRITS.

To the deep, to the deep,
 Down, down !
 Through the shade of Sleep,
 Through the cloudy strife
 Of Death and of Life ;
 Through the veil and the bar
 Of things which seem and are,
 Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
 Down, down !

While the sound whirls around,
 Down, down !
 As the fawn draws the hound ;
 As the lightning, the vapour ;
 As a weak moth, the taper ;
 Death, despair ; love, sorrow ;
 Time, both ; today, tomorrow ;
 As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,
 Down, down !

Through the grey void abysm,
 Down, down !
 Where the air is no prism,
 And the moon and stars are not,
 And the cavern-crag wear not
 The radiance of heaven
 Nor the gloom to earth given,—
 Where there is One pervading, One alone,—
 Down, down !

In the depth of the deep,
 Down, down !—
 Like veiled lightning asleep,
 Like the spark nursed in embers,
 The last look Love remembers,
 Like a diamond which shines
 On the dark wealth of mines,
 A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
 Down, down !

We have bound thee, we guide thee,
 Down, down,
 With the bright form beside thee.
 Resist not the weakness !
 Such strength is in meekness
 That the Eternal, the Immortal,
 Must unloose through life's portal
 The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne,
 By that alone.

SCENE IV.—*The Cave of DEMOGORGON. ASIA and PANTHEA.*

Panthea. What veiled Form sits on that ebony throne ?

Asia. The veil has fallen.

Panthea. I see a mighty Darkness
 Filling the seat of power ; and rays of gloom
 Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,
 Ungazed-upon and shapeless. Neither limb,
 Nor form, nor outline ; yet we feel it is
 A living Spirit.

Demogorgon. Ask what thou wouldst know.

Asia. What canst thou tell ?

Demogorgon. All things thou dar'st demand

Asia. Who made the living world ?

Demogorgon.

God.

Asia. Who made all
That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?

Demogorgon. God : Almighty God.

Asia. Who made that sense which, at the winds of Spring¹
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one beloved heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,—
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more ?

Demogorgon.

Merciful God.

Asia. And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which, from the links of the great chain of things
To every thought within the mind of man,
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death ;
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate ;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood ;
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling and keen shrieks day after day ;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell ?

Demogorgon.

He reigns.

Asia. Utter his name ! A world pining in pain
Asks but his name : curses shall drag him down !

Demogorgon. He reigns.

Asia.

I feel, I know it : who ?

Demogorgon.

He reigns.

Asia. Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth
at first,
And Light and Love ; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow. Such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them,
And semivital worms. But he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love ;

For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And, with this law alone "Let man be free,"
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith nor love nor law, to be
Omnipotent but friendless, is to reign.
And Jove now reigned; for on the race of Man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove,
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless pale tribes to mountain-caves:
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
And mad inquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, moly, amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
And he tamed fire,—which, like some beast of prey
Most terrible but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man, and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of Power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave Man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook but fell not; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit,
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimicked, and then mocked
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine,
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.

He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering Stars ; and how the Sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale Moon is transformed when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea.
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure ether shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man : for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain. But who rains down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God,
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on,—
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of Earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone?
Not Jove. While yet his frown shook heaven, ay when
His adversary from adamant chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

Demogorgon. All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou know'st if Jupiter be such or no.

Asia. Whom call'dst thou God?

Demogorgon. I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

Asia. Who is master of the slave?

Demogorgon. If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets. . . . But a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless ;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? what to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.

Asia. So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The reponse thou hast given ; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand ; and do thou answer me

As my own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined Hour arrive?

Demogorgon.

Behold !

Asia. The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds
Which trample the dim winds : in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars :
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair : they all
Sweep onward.

Demogorgon. These are the immortal Hours,
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

Asia. A Spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulf.
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak !

Spirit. I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect. Ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night Heaven's kingless throne.

Asia. What meanest thou?

Panthea.

That terrible Shadow floats

Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
Lo ! it ascends the car ; the coursers fly
Terrified ! Watch its path among the stars,
Blackening the night !

Asia.

Thus I am answered : strange !

Panthea. See, near the verge another chariot stays,—
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery. The young Spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope.
How its soft smiles attract the soul ! as light
Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

SPIRIT.

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
 They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
 And, when the red morning is bright'ning,
 They bathe in the fresh sunbeam.
 They have strength for their swiftness, I deem;—
 Then ascend with me, Daughter of Ocean.

I desire,—and their speed makes night kindle;
 I fear,—they outstrip the typhoon;
 Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
 We encircle the earth and the moon.
 We shall rest from long labours at noon:—
 Then ascend with me, Daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V.—*The Car pauses within a Cloud on the Top of a snowy Mountain.* ASIA, PANTHEA, and the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

SPIRIT.

On the brink of the night and the morning
 My coursers are wont to respire;
 But the Earth has just whispered a warning
 That their flight must be swifter than fire:
 They shall drink the hot speed of desire!

Asia. Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
 Would give them swifter speed.

Spirit.

Alas! it could not.

Panthea. O Spirit! pause, and tell whence is the light
 Which fills the cloud? The sun is yet unrisen.

Spirit. The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
 Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
 Which fills this vapour, as the ærial hue
 Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
 Flows from thy mighty Sister.

Panthea.

Yes, I feel—

Asia. What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale.

Panthea. How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
 I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
 The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
 Is working in the elements, which suffer
 Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell

That, on the day when the clear hyaline
 Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand
 Within a veined shell which floated on
 Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
 Among the Egean isles and by the shores
 Which bear thy name,—Love, like the atmosphere
 Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
 Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven,
 And the deep ocean and the sunless caves,
 And all that dwells within them ; till grief cast
 Eclipse upon the soul from which it came.
 Such art thou now ; nor is it I alone—
 Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,—
 But the whole world, which seeks thy sympathy.
 Hear'st thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
 Of all articulate beings ? Feel'st thou not
 The inanimate winds enamoured of thee ? List ! [*Music.*
Asia. Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
 Whose echoes they are : yet all love is sweet,
 Given or returned. Common as light is love,
 And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
 Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
 It makes the reptile equal to the God.
 They who inspire it most are fortunate,
 As I am now ; but those who feel it most
 Are happier still, after long sufferings,—
 As I shall soon become.

Panthea.

List ! Spirits speak.

VOICE in the air, singing.

Life of Life ! thy lips enkindle
 With their love the breath between them ;
 And thy smiles, before they dwindle,
 Make the cold air fire,—then screen them
 In those looks where whoso gazes
 Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light ! thy limbs are burning
 Through the vest which seems to hide them,
 As the radiant lines of morning
 Through the clouds, ere they divide them ;
 And this atmosphere divinest
 Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others ; none beholds thee
 (But thy voice sounds low and tender,
Like the fairest), for it folds thee
 From the sight—that liquid splendour ;¹
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever !

Lamp of Earth ! where'er thou movest,
 Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
 Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing !

ASIA.

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing ;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside the helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses !
Till, like one in slumber bound
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around
Into a sea profound of ever-spreading sound.

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions,
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But by the instinct of sweet music driven ;
Till through elysian garden-islets,
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnace glided,
The boat of my desire is guided :
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,²
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have passed Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray :
Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day :
A paradise of vaulted bowers
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld,—somewhat like thee,—
Which walk upon the sea, and chaunt melodiously !

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Heaven. JUPITER on his Throne ; THETIS and the other Deities assembled.*

Jupiter. Ye congregated Powers of Heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice ! henceforth I am Omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me ; alone
The soul of Man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear.
And, though my curses through the pendulous air,
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it ; though under my wrath's night
It climb the crags of life step after step,
Which wound it as ice wounds unsaddled feet ;
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepressed :—yet soon to fall.
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder—
That fatal Child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the destined Hour arrive
(Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful Spirit unbeheld)
To redescend, and trample out the spark.

Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede,
And let it fill the dædal cups like fire ;
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine,
Ye all-triumphant harmonies, arise,
As dew from earth under the twilight stars !
Drink ! be the nectar circling through your veins
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
Till exultation burst in one wide voice,
Like music from elysian winds.

And thou
Ascend beside me, veiled in the light

Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
 Thetis, bright image of Eternity!
 When thou didst cry, "Insufferable might!
 God! spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
 The penetrating presence; all my being,
 Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
 Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
 Sinking through its foundations":—even then
 Two mighty Spirits, mingling, made a third
 Mightier than either; which, unbodied now,
 Between us floats, felt although unbeheld,
 Waiting the incarnation which ascends
 (Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
 Griding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
 Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O World!
 The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
 Olympus?

[*The Car of the HOUR arrives. DEMOGORGON descends,
 and moves towards the Throne of JUPITER.*

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!

Demogorgon. Eternity. Demand no direr name.
 Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
 I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
 Mightier than thee. And we must dwell together
 Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
 The tyranny of Heaven none may retain,
 Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee.
 Yet, if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
 Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead,
 Put forth thy might.

Jupiter.

Detested prodigy!

Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
 I trample thee!—Thou lingerest? . . .

Mercy! mercy!

No pity, no release, no respite! Oh
 That thou wouldst make mine Enemy my judge,
 Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
 On Caucasus! *He* would not doom me thus.
 Gentle and just and dreadful, is he not
 The Monarch of the world? What then art thou?—
 No refuge! no appeal!—

Sink with me then!

We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
 Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
 Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
 Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
 Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,
 And whelm on them into the bottomless void
 This desolated world, and thee, and me,
 The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
 Of that for which they combated !

Ai ! Ai !

The elements obey me not ! I sink
 Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down !
 And, like a cloud, mine Enemy above
 Darkens my fall with victory ! Ai ! Ai !

SCENE II.—*The Mouth of a great River in the Island Atlantis.*

OCEAN *is discovered reclining near the Shore*; APOLLO
stands beside him.

Ocean. He fell, thou say'st, beneath his conqueror's frown ?

Apollo. Ay, when the strife was ended which made dim
 The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
 The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
 With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
 Of the victorious darkness, as he fell :
 Like the last glare of day's red agony
 Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
 Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.

Ocean. He sunk to the abyss ? to the dark void ?

Apollo. An eagle so, caught in some bursting cloud
 On Caucasus ; his thunder-baffled wings
 Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes,
 Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
 By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
 Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
 Prone, and the ærial ice clings over it.

Ocean. Henceforth the fields of heaven-reflecting sea
 Which are my realm will heave unstained with blood
 Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
 Swayed by the summer air ; my streams will flow
 Round many-peopled continents, and round
 Fortunate isles. And from their glassy thrones

Blue Proteus and his humid Nymphs shall mark
 The shadow of fair ships (as mortals see
 The floating bark of the light-laden moon,
 With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
 Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea) ;
 Tracking their path no more by blood and groans
 And desolation, and the mingled voice
 Of slavery and command,—but by the light
 Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
 And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
 That sweetest music, such as Spirits love.

Apollo. And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make
 My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
 Darkens the sphere I guide.—But list ! I hear
 The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
 That sits i' the Morning Star.

Ocean. Thou must away.
 Thy steeds will pause at even,—till when, farewell.
 The loud deep calls me home even now, to feed it
 With azure calm out of the emerald urns
 Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
 Behold the Nereids under the green sea—
 Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,
 Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair,
 With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,—
 Hastening to grace their mighty Sister's joy.

[*A sound of waves is heard.*]

It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
 Peace, monster ! I come now. Farewell.

Apollo.

Farewell.

SCENE III.—*Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, *the*
 EARTH, SPIRITS : ASIA and PANTHEA borne in the Car with
the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, *who descends.*

Hercules. Most glorious among Spirits ! thus doth Strength
 To Wisdom, Courage, and long-suffering Love,
 And thee, who art the form they animate,
 Minister like a slave.

Prometheus.

Thy gentle words

Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
And long delayed.

Asia, thou light of life,
Shadow of beauty unbeheld ; and ye,
Fair sister Nymphs, who made long years of pain
Sweet to remember, through your love and care ;
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants
Which curtain-out the day with leaves and flowers ;
And paved with veined emerald ; and a fountain
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears,
Like snow or silver or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light.
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees ; and all around are mossy seats,
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass :—
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own ;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide Man from mutability ?—
And, if ye sigh, then I will smile ; and thou,
Ione, shalt chaunt fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep,—when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence.
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits ; and, like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be.
And hither come, sped on the charmed winds
Which meet from all the points of heaven (as bees
From every flower ærial Enna feeds,
At their own island-homes in Himera)
The echoes of the human world, which tell

Of the low voice of Love, almost unheard,
 And dove-eyed Pity's murmured pain, and Music,
 Itself the echo of the heart, and all
 That tempers or improves man's life, now free.
 And lovely apparitions, dim at first,
 Then radiant,—as the mind, arising bright
 From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
 Of which these are the phantoms), casts on them
 The gathered rays which are reality,—
 Shall visit us ; the progeny immortal
 Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
 And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
 The wandering voices and the shadows these
 Of all that man becomes, the mediators
 Of that best worship, love, by him and us
 Given and returned ; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
 More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
 And, veil by veil, evil and error fall.
 Such virtue has the cave and place around.

[Turning to the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
 Give her that curvèd shell which Proteus old
 Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
 A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
 Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

Ione. Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
 Than all thy sisters, this the mystic shell.
 See the pale azure fading into silver,
 Lining it with a soft yet glowing light :
 Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there ?

Spirit. It seems in truth the fairest shell of ocean ;
 Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.

Prometheus. Go, borne over the cities of mankind
 On whirlwind-footed coursers : once again
 Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world,
 And, as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
 Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,
 Loosening its mighty music ; it shall be
 As thunder mingled with clear echoes. Then
 Return : and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.

And thou, O Mother Earth !—

The Earth.

I hear, I feel.

Thy lips are on me, and thy touch runs down
Even to the adamantine central gloom
Along these marble nerves ; 'tis life, 'tis joy,—
And, through my withered, old, and icy frame,
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair
Folded in my sustaining arms ; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
And birds and beasts and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
Draining the poison of despair, shall take
And interchange sweet nutriment. To me
Shall they become like sister-antelopes,
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float
Under the stars like balm : night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose :
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
Strength for the coming day and all its joy.
And death shall be the last embrace of her
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother,
Folding her child, says "Leave me not again."

Asia. O mother ! wherefore speak the name of death ?
Cease they to love and move and breathe and speak
Who die ?

The Earth. It would avail not to reply :
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life :
They sleep, and it is lifted. And meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild,
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,
Shall clothe the forests and the fields—ay, even
The crag-built deserts of the barren deep—
With ever-living leaves and fruits and flowers.—
And thou ! There is a cavern where my spirit

Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
 Made my heart mad. And those who did inhale it
 Became mad too ; and built a temple there,
 And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
 The erring nations round to mutual war,
 And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee.
 Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
 A violet's exhalation ; and it fills
 With a serener light and crimson air,
 Intense yet soft, the rocks and woods around.
 It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine ;
 And the dark linkèd ivy tangling wild ;
 And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
 Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
 As they rain through them ; and bright golden globes
 Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven ;
 And, through their veinèd leaves and amber stems,
 The flowers whose purple and translucid bowls
 Stand ever mantling with aërial dew,
 The drink of spirits. And it circles round,
 Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,
 Inspiring calm and happy thoughts—like mine,
 Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
 Arise ! Appear !

[A SPIRIT rises in the likeness of a winged child.

This is my torch-bearer ;
 Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing
 On eyes from which he kindled it anew
 With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,—
 For such is that within thine own.—Run, wayward,
 And guide this company beyond the peak
 Of Bacchic Nysa, Mænad-haunted mountain,
 And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,
 Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
 With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying ;
 And up the green ravine, across the vale,
 Beside the windless and crystalline pool
 Where ever lies on unerasing waves
 The image of a temple built above,
 Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
 And palm-like capital, and over-wrought
 And populous most with living imagery,—

Praxitelean shapes whose marble smiles
 Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
 It is deserted now ; but once it bore
 Thy name, Prometheus. There the emulous youths
 Bore to thy honour through the divine gloom
 The lamp which was thine emblem ; even as those
 Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
 Into the grave across the night of life,—
 As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
 To this far goal of time. Depart, farewell.
 Beside that temple is the destined cave.

SCENE IV.—*A Forest. In the Background a Cave.* PROMETHEUS,
 ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, and the SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Ione. Sister, it is not earthly ! How it glides
 Under the leaves ! how on its head there burns
 A light like a green star, whose emerald beams
 Are twined with its fair hair ! how, as it moves,
 The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass !
 Knowest thou it ?

Panthea. It is the delicate Spirit
 That guides the earth through heaven. From afar
 The populous constellations call that light
 The loveliest of the planets :—and sometimes
 It floats along the spray of the salt sea ;
 Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud ;
 Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,
 Or o'er the mountain-tops, or down the rivers,
 Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
 Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned,
 It loved our sister Asia, and it came
 Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
 Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
 As one bit by a dipsas ; and with her
 It made its childish confidence, and told her
 All it had known or seen (for it saw much,
 Yet idly reasoned what it saw), and called her—
 For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I—
 “Mother, dear mother.”

The Spirit of the Earth (running to Asia). Mother,
 dearest mother,
 May I then talk with thee as I was wont ?

May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
After thy looks have made them tired of joy ?
May I then play beside thee the long noons,
When work is none in the bright silent air ?

Asia. I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth
Can cherish thee unenvied. Speak, I pray :
Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

[child

Spirit of the Earth. Mother, I am grown wiser (though a
Cannot be wise like thee) within this day ;
And happier too ; happier and wiser both.
Thou know'st that toads and snakes and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world :
And that, among the haunts of humankind,
Hard-featured men, or with proud angry looks,
Or cold staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
Or other such foul masks with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we Spirits call Man,—
And women too, ugliest of all things evil
(Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
When good and kind, free and sincere, like thee),
When false or frowning,—made me sick at heart
To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen.
Well, my path lately lay through a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it :
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate :
When there was heard a sound, so loud it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all ;
A long long sound as it would never end :
And all the inhabitants leapt suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to heaven, while yet
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves ; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain
Passed floating through the air, and fading still

Into the winds that scattered them ; and those
 From whom they passed seemed mild and lovely forms
 After some foul disguise had fallen. And all
 Were somewhat changed ; and, after brief surprise
 And greetings of delighted wonder, all
 Went to their sleep again. And, when the dawn
 Came,—wouldst thou think that toads and snakes and efts
 Could e'er be beautiful ? yet so they were,—
 And that with little change of shape or hue.
 All things had put their evil nature off.
 I cannot tell my joy when o'er a lake,
 Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,
 I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward,
 And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries
 With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
 Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky.
 So, with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
 We meet again, the happiest change of all.

Asia. And never will we part, till thy chaste Sister,
 Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon,
 Will look on thy more warm and equal light
 Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow,
 And love thee.

Spirit of the Earth. What ! as Asia loves Prometheus ?

Asia. Peace, wanton ! thou art yet not old enough.
 Think ye, by gazing on each other's eyes,
 To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
 With spherèd fires the interlunar air ?

Spirit of the Earth. Nay, mother, while my sister trims
 her lamp

'Tis hard I should go darkling !

Asia.

Listen ; look !

[*The SPIRIT OF THE HOUR enters.*]

Prometheus. We feel what thou hast heard and seen : yet
 speak.

Spirit of the Hour. Soon as the sound had ceased whose
 thunder filled

The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
 There was a change : the impalpable thin air
 And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
 As if the sense of love, dissolved in them,
 Had folded itself round the spherèd world.

My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe.
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birthplace in the sun :
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire ;
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair Nymphs, looking the love we feel,—
In memory of the tidings it has borne,—
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbænic snake,
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock
The flight from which they find repose.—Alas !
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue,
When all remains untold which ye would hear ?
As I have said, I floated to the earth :
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be. I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind ;
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within,
Expressed in outward things. But soon I looked ;
And behold ! thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do.
None fawned, none trampled ; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
“ All hope abandon, ye who enter here.”
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became (worse fate !) the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak.
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope ; till there remained

Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill.
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, passed—gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure ;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet, being now, made earth like heaven. Nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill-shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons,—wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,—
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no-more-remembered fame,
Which from their unworn obelisks look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors, mouldering round.¹
Those imaged, to the pride of kings and priests,
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted,—and are now
But an astonishment. Even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by God and man,
Which, under many a name and many a form,
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark, and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the Tyrant of the World,—
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,

And slain among men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,—
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines.
The painted veil—by those who were, called life—
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside.
The loathsome mask has fallen. The man remains,—
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man :¹
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself ; just, gentle, wise : but man.
Passionless ? no :—yet free from guilt or pain,—
Which were, for his will made or suffered them ;
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance and death and mutability,—
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*A part of the Forest near the Cave of PROMETHEUS.*

PANTHEA and IONE are sleeping: they awaken gradually during the first Song.

VOICE OF UNSEEN SPIRITS.

The pale stars are gone,
For the Sun, their swift shepherd,
To their folds them compelling
In the depths of the dawn,
Hastes in meteor-eclipsing array; and they flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard.
But where are ye?

A train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly, singing.

Here, oh here!
We bear the bier
Of the Father of many a cancelled year.
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in Eternity.
Strew, oh strew
Hair, not yew!
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!
Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours!

Haste, oh haste,
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste!
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,
From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony.

IONE.

What dark forms were they?

PANTHEA.

The past Hours weak and grey,
 With the spoil which their toil
 Raked together
 From the conquest but One could foil.

IONE.

Have they passed ?

PANTHEA.

They have passed ;
 They outsped the blast.
 While 'tis said, they are fled.

IONE.

Whither, oh whither ?

PANTHEA.

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

VOICE OF UNSEEN SPIRITS.

Bright clouds float in heaven,
 Dew-stars gleam on earth,
 Waves assemble on ocean :
 They are gathered and driven
 By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee !
 They shake with emotion,
 They dance in their mirth.
 But where are ye ?

The pine-boughs are singing
 Old songs with new gladness,
 The billows and fountains
 Fresh music are flinging,
 Like the notes of a spirit, from land and from sea ;
 The storms mock the mountains
 With the thunder of gladness.
 But where are ye ?

Ione. What charioteers are these ?

Panthea.

Where are their chariots ?

SEMICHORUS I. OF HOURS.

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
 Has drawn back the figured curtain of sleep,¹
 Which covered our being and darkened our birth
 In the deep.

A VOICE.
In the deep?

SEMICHORUS II.
Oh! below the deep.

SEMICHORUS I.
An hundred ages we had been kept
Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who waked as his brother slept
Found the truth—

SEMICHORUS II.
Worse than his visions were.

SEMICHORUS I.
We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep;
We have known the voice of Love in dreams;
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

SEMICHORUS II.
As the billows leap in the morning beams.

CHORUS.
Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the Day that too swiftly flees
To check its flight ere the cave of Night.
Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the Day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.
But now—oh weave the mystic measure
Of music and dance and shapes of light!
Let the Hours, and the Spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A VOICE.
Unite.

Panthea. See where the Spirits of the Human Mind,
Wrapped in sweet sounds as in bright veils, approach.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS OF THE MIND.
We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along;

As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds half asleep.

CHORUS OF HOURS.

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
For sandals of lightning are on your feet,
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veiled not ?

CHORUS OF SPIRITS OF THE MIND.

We come from the mind
Of humankind,
Which was late so dusk and obscene and blind :—
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion :—

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss
Whose caverns are crystal palaces ;
From those skyey towers
Where thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours :—

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses ;
From the azure isles
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her siren wiles :—

From the temples high
Of man's ear and eye,
Roofed over sculpture and poesy ;
From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs
Where Science bedews his dædal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds and hopes and fears,
We waded and flew,—
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm ;
And beyond our eyes
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on paradise.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS AND HOURS.

Then weave the web of the mystic measure ;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,—
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendour and harmony !

CHORUS OF SPIRITS OF THE MIND.

Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run ;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonise :
Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight,
And Love, Thought, and Breath,
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield ;

We will take our plan
From the new world of Man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

CHORUS OF HOURS.
Break the dance, and scatter the song ;
Let some depart, and some remain.

SEMICHORUS I.
We beyond heaven are driven along :

SEMICHORUS II.
Us the enchantments of earth retain :

SEMICHORUS I.
Ceaseless and rapid and fierce and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

SEMICHORUS II.
Solemn and slow and serene and bright,
Leading the day, and outspeeding the night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light.

SEMICHORUS I.
We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees and the beasts and the clouds appear
From its chaos, made calm by love, not fear.

SEMICHORUS II.
We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

CHORUS OF HOURS AND SPIRITS.
Break the dance, and scatter the song ;
Let some depart, and some remain.
Wherever we fly, we lead along
In leashes like starbeams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

Panthea. Ha ! they are gone !
Ione. Yet feel you no delight
From the past sweetness ?
Panthea. As the bare green hill,
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,

Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky !

Ione. Even whilst we speak,
New notes arise. What is that awful sound ?

Panthea. 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world,
Kindling within the strings of the waved air
Æolian modulations.

Ione. Listen too
How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen, awakening tones,
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air,
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

Panthea. But see where, through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches over-canopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet
Between the close moss, violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody (like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts),
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet,
Under the ground and through the windless air.

Ione. I see a chariot like that thinnest boat
In which the Mother of the Months is borne
By ebbing night into her western cave,
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams ;
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods,
Distinctly seen through that dusk airy veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass.
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genii of the thunderstorm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it ; they roll
And move and grow as with an inward wind.
Within it sits a wingèd infant. White
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow ;
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost ;
Its limbs gleam white through the wind-flowing folds

Of its white robe, woof of etherial pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in strings ; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around
With fire that is not brightness. In its hand
It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheelèd clouds ; which, as they roll
Over the grass and flowers and waves, wake sounds
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.

Panthea. And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
A sphere which is as many thousand spheres,—
Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
Flow, as through empty space, music and light :
Ten-thousand orbs involving and involved,
Purple and azure, white and green and golden,¹
Sphere within sphere ; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
Yet each intertranspicuous. And they whirl
Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning ;
And, with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on,
Kindling with mingled sounds and many tones
Intelligible words and music wild.
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
Of elemental subtlety, like light ;
And the wild odour of the forest-flowers,
The music of the living grass and air,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams,
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed
Seem kneaded into one aërial mass
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
On its own folded wings and wavy hair
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep ;

And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

Ione. 'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

Panthea. And from a star upon its forehead shoot,
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtined,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel :
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,¹
And, perpendicular now and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and, as they pierce and pass,
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart ;—
Infinite mine of adamant and gold,
Valueless stones and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns poised,
With vegetable silver overspread,
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water-springs
Whence the great sea even as a child is fed,
Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
With kingly ermine snow. The beams flash on,
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles ; anchors, beaks of ships ;
Planks turned to marble ; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythèd chariots ; and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which Death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin ;—
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population, which the earth grew over,
Was mortal, but not human. See, they lie,
Their monstrous works and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes, and fanes ; prodigious shapes
Huddled in grey annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard black deep : and, over these,
The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, bony chains twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs

Had crushed the iron crags ; and, over these,
 The jagged alligator, and the might
 Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
 Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores
 And weed-overgrown continents of earth
 Increased and multiplied like summer worms
 On an abandoned corpse,—till the blue globe
 Wrapped deluge round it like a cloak, and they
 Yelled, gasped, and were abolished ; or some God
 Whose throne was in a comet passed, and cried
 “ Be not ! ” and like my words they were no more.

THE EARTH.

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness !
 The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
 The vaporous exultation not to be confined !
 Ha ha ! the animation of delight
 Which wraps me like an atmosphere of light,
 And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind !

THE MOON.

Brother mine, calm wanderer,
 Happy globe of land and air,
 Some spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
 Which penetrates my frozen frame,
 And passes, with the warmth of flame,
 With love and odour and deep melody,
 Through me, through me !

THE EARTH.

Ha ha ! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
 My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains,
 Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter !
 The oceans and the deserts and the abysses,
 And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
 Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after

They cry aloud as I do :—“ Sceptred Curse,
 Who all our green and azure universe
 Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction, sending
 A solid cloud to rain hot thunderstones,
 And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
 All I bring forth to one void mass battering and blending—

" Until each crag-like tower and storied column,
Palace and obelisk and temple solemn,
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud and snow and fire,
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire—

" How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all !
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, Love
Bursts in like light on caves cloven by the thunderball ! "

THE MOON.

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow and sing and shine :
A spirit from my heart bursts forth ;
It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom : oh it must be thine
On mine, on mine !

Gazing on thee, I feel, I know,
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move :
Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of :
'Tis Love, all Love !

THE EARTH.

It interpenetrates my granite mass ;
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers ;
Upon the winds, among the clouds, 'tis spread ;
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,—
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers ;
And, like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being :—
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever :—
Till hate and fear and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who *was* a many-sided mirror
Which could distort to many a shape of error
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love ;
Which over all his kind—as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even—
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move :—

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is poured,—
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit,—then weeps on her child restored.

Man,—oh not men ! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamant stress ;
As the Sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of Planets struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea ;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love ;
Labour and pain and grief, in life's green grove,
Sport like tame beasts,—none knew how gentle they could be !

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites—
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey—
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass,—
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children
wear ;

Language is a perpetual Orphic song
Which rules with dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave ; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep

They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on.
The tempest is his steed ; he strides the air,
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
“Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me ; I have none.”

THE MOON.

The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep ;
And through my newly-woven bowers
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

THE EARTH.

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half-infrozen dew-globe, green and gold
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the noon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

THE MOON.

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy and heaven's smile divine ;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power,
Which doth array thy sphere ; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine !

THE EARTH.

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens,—dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep ;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

THE MOON.

As, in the soft and sweet eclipse
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull ;

So, when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered ; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh too full !

Thou art speeding round the sun,
Brightest world of many a one ;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of heaven
To whom life and light is given.
I, thy crystal paramour,
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar paradise,
Magnet-like, of lovers' eyes ;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like, around thee move—
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side—
Like a Mænad round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmean forest.
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest,
I must hurry, whirl, and follow,
Through the heavens wide and hollow ;
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking, from thy sense and sight,
Beauty, majesty, and might ;—
As a lover or chamelëon
Grows like what it looks upon ;
As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds ;
As a grey and watery mist
Glowing like solid amethyst
Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow,
And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.¹

THE EARTH.

O gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman borne the summer night
Through isles for ever calm ;
O gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramlings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.

Panthea. I rise—as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light among dark rocks—
Out of the stream of sound.

Ione. Ah me ! sweet sister,
The stream of sound has ebbd away from us :
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear soft dew
Shaken from a bathing Wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

Panthea. Peace, peace ! A mighty Power which is as
darkness
Is rising out of earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight. The bright visions,
Wherein the singing Spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

Ione. There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

Panthea. An universal sound like words. Oh list !

DEMOGORGON.

Thou Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb, gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies !

THE EARTH.

I hear : I am as a drop of dew that dies.

DEMOGORGON.

Thou Moon which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee ;
Whilst each, to men and beasts and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony !

THE MOON.

I hear : I am a leaf shaken by thee.

DEMOGORGON.

Ye Kings of Suns and Stars ! Dæmons and Gods,
 Etherial Dominations ! who possess
 Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
 Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness !

A VOICE FROM ABOVE.

Our great Republic hears : we are blest, and bless.

DEMOGORGON.

Ye happy Dead ! whom beams of brightest verse
 Are clouds to hide, not colours to pourtray,
 Whether your nature is that universe
 Which once ye saw and suffered—

A VOICE FROM BENEATH.

Or, as they
 Whom we have left, we change and pass away—

DEMOGORGON.

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
 From man's high mind even to the central stone
 Of sullen lead ; from heaven's star-fretted domes
 To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on !

A CONFUSED VOICE.

We hear : thy words waken Oblivion.

DEMOGORGON.

Spirits whose homes are flesh—ye beasts and birds,
 Ye worms and fish ! ye living leaves and buds,
 Lightning and wind, and ye untameable herds,
 Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes !

A VOICE.

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

DEMOGORGON.

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave ;
 A dupe and a deceiver ; a decay ;
 A traveller from the cradle to the grave
 Through the dim night of this immortal day !

ALL.

Speak : thy strong words may never pass away.

DEMOGORGON.

This is the day which down the void abysm,
At the Earth-born's spell, yawns for Heaven's despotism,

And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep.

Love, from its awful throne of patient power

In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour

Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,

And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs,

And folds over the world its healings wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance—

These are the seals of that most firm assurance

Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength ;

And, if with infirm hand Eternity,

Mother of many acts and hours, should free

The serpent that would clasp her with his length,

These are the spells by which to reassume

An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite ;

To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;

To defy power which seems omnipotent ;

To love and bear ; to hope till hope creates

From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;

Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent ;

This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be

Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free ;

This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory !

NOTE ON PROMETHEUS UNBOUND, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

On the 12th of March 1818 Shelley quitted England, never to return. His principal motive was the hope that his health would be improved by a milder climate; he suffered very much during the winter previous to his emigration, and this decided his vacillating purpose. In December 1817 he had written from Marlow to a friend, saying:

"My health has been materially worse. My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to such a state of unnatural and keen excitement that (only to instance the organ of sight) I find the very blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought. Such, with little intermission, is my condition. The hours devoted to study are selected with vigilant caution from among these periods of endurance. It is not for this that I think of travelling to Italy, even if I knew that Italy would relieve me. But I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack; and although at present it has passed away without any considerable vestige of its existence, yet this symptom sufficiently shows the true nature of my disease to be consumptive. It is to my advantage that this malady is in its nature slow, and, if one is sufficiently alive to its advances, is susceptible of cure from a warm climate. In the event of its assuming any decided shape, *it would be my duty* to go to Italy without delay. It is not mere health, but life, that I should seek: and that not for my own sake; I feel I am capable of trampling on all such weakness—but for the sake of those to whom my life may be a source of happiness, utility, security, and honour, and to some of whom my death might be all that is the reverse."

In almost every respect his journey to Italy was advantageous. He left behind friends to whom he was attached; but cares of a thousand kinds, many springing from his lavish generosity, crowded round him in his native country, and, except the society of one or two friends, he had no compensation. The climate caused him to consume half his existence in helpless suffering. His dearest pleasure, the free enjoyment of the scenes of Nature, was marred by the same circumstance.

He went direct to Italy, avoiding even Paris, and did not make any pause till he arrived at Milan. The first aspect of Italy enchanted Shelley; it seemed a garden of delight placed beneath a clearer and brighter heaven than any he had lived under before. He wrote long descriptive letters during the first year of his residence in Italy, which, as compositions, are the most beautiful in the world, and show how truly he appreciated and studied the wonders of Nature and Art in that divine land.

The poetical spirit within him speedily revived with all the power and with more than all the beauty of his first attempts. He meditated three subjects as the ground-work for lyrical dramas. One was the story of Tasso; of this a slight fragment of a song of Tasso remains. The other was one founded on the *Book of Job*, which he never abandoned in idea, but of which no trace remains among his papers. The third was the *Prometheus Unbound*. The Greek tragedians were now his most familiar companions in his wanderings, and the sublime majesty of Æschylus filled him with wonder and delight. The father of Greek tragedy does not possess the pathos of Sophocles, nor the variety and tenderness of Euripides; the interest on which he founds his dramas is often elevated above human vicissitudes into the mighty passions and throes of gods and demigods: such fascinated the abstract imagination of Shelley.

We spent a month at Milan, visiting the Lake of Como during that interval. Thence we passed in succession to Pisa, Leghorn, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, Este, Rome, Naples, and back again to Rome, whither we returned early in March 1819. During all this time Shelley meditated the subject of his drama, and wrote portions of it. Other poems were composed during this interval, and

while at the Bagni di Lucca he translated Plato's *Symposium*. But, though he diversified his studies, his thoughts centred in the *Prometheus*. At last, when at Rome, during a bright and beautiful Spring, he gave up his whole time to the composition. The spot selected for his study was, as he mentions in his preface, the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. These are little known to the ordinary visitor at Rome. He describes them in a letter, with that poetry and delicacy and truth of description which render his narrated impressions of scenery of unequalled beauty and interest.

At first he completed the drama in three acts. It was not till several months after, when at Florence, that he conceived that a fourth act, a sort of hymn of rejoicing in the fulfilment of the prophecies with regard to Prometheus, ought to be added to complete the composition.

The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity: God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall,

"Brought death into the world and all our woe."

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. It is not my part in these Notes to notice the arguments that have been urged against this opinion, but to mention the fact that he entertained it, and was indeed attached to it with fervent enthusiasm. That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on was the image of one warring with the Evil Principle, oppressed not only by it, but by all—even the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity; a victim full of fortitude and hope and the spirit of triumph, emanating from a reliance on the ultimate omnipotence of Good. Such he had depicted in his last poem, when he made Laon the enemy and the victim of tyrants. He now took a more idealized image of the same subject. He followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind, beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom. Jupiter punished the temerity of the Titan by chaining him to a rock of Caucasus, and causing a vulture to devour his still-renewed heart. There was a prophecy afloat in heaven portending the fall of Jove, the secret of averting which was known only to Prometheus; and the god offered freedom from torture on condition of its being communicated to him. According to the mythological story, this referred to the offspring of Thetis, who was destined to be greater than his father. Prometheus at last bought pardon for his crime of enriching mankind with his gifts, by revealing the prophecy. Hercules killed the vulture, and set him free; and Thetis was married to Peleus, the father of Achilles.

Shelley adapted the catastrophe of this story to his peculiar views. The son greater than his father, born of the nuptials of Jupiter and Thetis, was to dethrone Evil, and bring back a happier reign than that of Saturn. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture; till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one of the Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus—she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the benefactor of mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union. In the fourth Act, the Poet gives further

scope to his imagination, and idealizes the forms of creation—such as we know them, instead of such as they appeared to the Greeks. Maternal Earth, the mighty parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth, the guide of our planet through the realms of sky; while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of evil in the superior sphere.

Shelley develops more particularly in the lyrics of this drama his abstruse and imaginative theories with regard to the creation. It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry; a few scattered fragments of observations and remarks alone remain. He considered these philosophical views of Mind and Nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry.

More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealize the real—to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery.

I find in one of his manuscript-books some remarks on a line in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, which show at once the critical subtlety of Shelley's mind, and explain his apprehension of those "minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us," which he pronounces, in the letter quoted in the note to the *Revolt of Islam*, to comprehend all that is sublime in man.

"In the Greek Shakespeare, Sophocles, we find the image,"

Πολλὰς ὁ ὁδοὺς ἐλθόντα φροντίδος πλάνους :

a line of almost unfathomable depth of poetry; yet how simple are the images in which it is arrayed!

'Coming to many ways in the wanderings of careful thought.'

If the words ὁδοὺς and πλάνους had not been used, the line might have been explained in a metaphorical instead of an absolute sense, as we say 'ways and means,' and 'wanderings' for error and confusion. But they meant literally paths or roads, such as we tread with our feet; and wanderings, such as a man makes when he loses himself in a desert, or roams from city to city—as Œdipus, the speaker of this verse, was destined to wander, blind and asking charity. What a picture does this line suggest of the mind as a wilderness of intricate paths, wide as the universe, which is here made its symbol; a world within a world which he who seeks some knowledge with respect to what he ought to do searches throughout, as he would search the external universe for some valued thing which was hidden from him upon its surface!"

In reading Shelley's poetry, we often find similar verses, resembling, but not imitating, the Greek in this species of imagery; for, though he adopted the style, he gifted it with that originality of form and colouring which sprung from his own genius.

In the *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley fulfils the promise quoted from a letter in the Note on the *Revolt of Islam*.² The tone of the composition is calmer

² While correcting the proof-sheets of that poem, it struck me that the poet had indulged in an exaggerated view of the evils of restored despotism; which, however injurious and degrading, were less openly sanguinary than the triumph of anarchy, such as it appeared in France at the close of the last century. But at this time a book, *Scenes of Spanish Life*, translated by Lieutenant Crawford from the German of Dr. Huber, of Rostock, fell into my hands. The account of the triumph of the priests and the serviles, after the French invasion of Spain in 1823, bears a strong and frightful resemblance to some of the descriptions of the massacre of the patriots in the *Revolt of Islam*.

and more majestic ; the poetry, more perfect as a whole ; and the imagination displayed, at once more pleasingly beautiful and more varied and daring. The description of the Hours, as they are seen in the cave of Demogorgon, is an instance of this—it fills the mind as the most charming picture—we long to see an artist at work to bring to our view the

“ cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds
Which trample the dim winds : in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars :
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair : they all
Sweep onward.”

Through the whole poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of Love ; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world.

England had been rendered a painful residence to Shelley, as much by the sort of persecution with which in those days all men of liberal opinions were visited, and by the injustice he had lately endured in the Court of Chancery, as by the symptoms of disease which made him regard a visit to Italy as necessary to prolong his life. An exile, and strongly impressed with the feeling that the majority of his countrymen regarded him with sentiments of aversion such as his own heart could experience towards none, he sheltered himself from such disgusting and painful thoughts in the calm retreats of poetry, and built up a world of his own—with the more pleasure, since he hoped to induce some one or two to believe that the earth might become such, did mankind themselves consent. The charm of the Roman climate helped to clothe his thoughts in greater beauty than they had ever worn before. And, as he wandered among the ruins made one with Nature in their decay, or gazed on the Praxitelean shapes that throng the Vatican, the Capitol, and the palaces of Rome, his soul imbibed forms of loveliness which became a portion of itself. There are many passages in the *Prometheus* which show the intense delight he received from such studies, and give back the impression with a beauty of poetical description peculiarly his own. He felt this, as a poet must feel when he satisfies himself by the result of his labours ; and he wrote from Rome, “ *My Prometheus Unbound* is just finished, and in a month or two I shall send it. It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted ; and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts.”

I may mention, for the information of the more critical reader, that the verbal alterations in this edition of *Prometheus* are made from a list of errata written by Shelley himself.

THE CENCI.

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

DEDICATION.

TO LEIGH HUNT.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I inscribe with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

Those writings which I have hitherto published have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just. I can also perceive in them the literary defects incidental to youth and impatience; they are dreams of what ought to be, or may be. The drama which I now present to you is a sad reality. I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor, and am content to paint, with such colours as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honourable, innocent, and brave; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil; one who knows better how to receive and how to confer a benefit, though he must ever confer far more than he can receive; one of simpler and (in the highest sense of the word) of purer life and manners, I never knew; and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list.

In that patient and irreconcilable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture which the tenor of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you!

Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

ROME, *May 29, 1819.*

PREFACE.

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me, during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city during the Pontificate of Clement VIII., in the year 1599. The story is that an old man, having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature

formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered ; and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had, during his life, repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred-thousand crowns ; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue.* Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it—their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions, and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end—would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest : and that the feelings of the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs, and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice, which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.

This national and universal interest which the story produces, and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great city where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact, it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained, as I imagined, but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, *King Lear*, and the two plays in which the tale of *Edipus* is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before Shakespeare and Sophocles made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous : anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself ; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant, and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well : but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another ; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner, she would have been wiser and better ; but she would never have been a tragic

* The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness ; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

character : the few whom such an exhibition would have interested could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification—it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge—that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered consists.

I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true : thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and man which pervades the tragedy of *The Cenci*. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days ; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit ; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion co-exists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration ; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and, without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge—never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus, in the first scene of the fourth act, Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci, after having administered the opiate, was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death ; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation ; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care, in writing this play, the introduction of what is commonly called "mere poetry" ; and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature.¹

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects I have written more carelessly ; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect, I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that, in order to move men to true sympathy, we must use the familiar language of men ; and that our great ancestors, the ancient English poets, are the writers a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs.

¹ An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* of Calderon : the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.

But it must be the real language of men in general, and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted. I need not be assured that success is a very different matter ; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavoured whilst at Rome to observe such monuments of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is most admirable as a work of art : it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features ; she seems sad and stricken-down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery, from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate ; the eyebrows are distinct and arched ; the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed, and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear ; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping, and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another : her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent ; and, though in part modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews ; and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine, half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the chapel to St. Thomas) supported by granite columns, and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the ancient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of open work. One of the gateways of the palace, formed of immense stones, and leading through a passage dark and lofty, and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella I could obtain no further information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

RELATION OF THE DEATH OF THE FAMILY OF
THE CENCI.

THE most wicked life which the Roman nobleman, Francesco Cenci, led while he lived in this world not only occasioned his own ruin and death, but also that of many others, and brought down the entire destruction of his house. This nobleman was the son of Monsignore Cenci, who, having been treasurer during the pontificate of Pius V., left immense wealth to Francesco, his only son. From this inheritance alone he enjoyed an income of 160,000 crowns; and he increased his fortune by marrying an exceedingly rich lady, who died after she had given birth to seven unfortunate children. He then contracted a second marriage with Lucretia Petroni, a lady of a noble Roman family; but he had no children by her. Sodomy was the least, and atheism the greatest, of the vices of Francesco; as is proved by the tenor of his life. For he was three times accused of sodomy, and paid the sum of 100,000 crowns to government, in commutation of the punishment rightfully awarded to this crime: and, concerning his religion, it is sufficient to state that he never frequented any church; and, although he caused a small chapel, dedicated to the Apostle St. Thomas, to be built in the court of his palace, his intention in so doing was to bury there all his children, whom he cruelly hated. He had driven the eldest of these, Giacomo, Cristoforo, and Rocco, from the paternal mansion while they were yet too young to have given him any real cause of displeasure. He sent them to the university of Salamanca; but, refusing to remit to them there the money necessary for their maintenance, they desperately returned home. They found that this change only increased their misery; for the hatred and contempt of their father towards them were so aggravated that he refused to dress or maintain them, so that they were obliged to have recourse to the Pope, who caused Cenci to make them a fit allowance, with which they withdrew from his house.

The third imprisonment of Francesco for his accustomed crime of sodomy occurred at this time; and his sons took occasion to supplicate the Pope to punish their father, and to remove so great a monster from his family. The Pope, though before inclined to condemn Francesco to the deserved punishment of death, would not do it at the request of his sons, but permitted him again to compound with the law by paying the accustomed penalty of 100,000 crowns. The hatred of Francesco towards his sons was augmented by this proceeding on their part; he cursed them; and often also struck and ill-treated his daughters. The eldest of these, being unable any longer to support the cruelty of her father, exposed her miserable condition to the Pope, and supplicated him either to marry her according to his choice, or to shut her up in a monastery, that by any means she might be liberated from the cruel oppression of her parent. Her prayer was heard, and the Pope, in pity to her unhappiness, bestowed her in marriage to Signore Carlo Gabrielli, one of the first gentlemen of the city of Gubbio, and obliged Francesco to give her a fitting dowry of some thousand crowns.

Francesco fearing that his youngest daughter would, when she grew up, follow the example of her sister, bethought himself how to hinder this design, and for that purpose shut her up alone in an apartment of the palace, where he himself brought her food, so that no one might approach her; and imprisoned her in this manner for several months, often inflicting on her blows with a stick.

In the meantime ensued the death of two of his sons, Rocco and Cristoforo—one being assassinated by a surgeon, and the other by Paolo Corso, while he was attending mass. The inhuman father showed every sign of joy on hearing this news; saying that nothing would exceed his pleasure if all his children died, and that, when the grave should receive the last, he would, as a demonstration of joy, make a bonfire of all that he possessed. And on the present occasion, as a further sign of his hatred, he refused to pay the smallest sum towards the funeral-expenses of his murdered sons.

Francesco carried his wicked debauchery to such an excess that he caused girls (of whom he constantly kept a number in his house) and also common courtesans to sleep in the bed of his wife ; and often endeavoured, by force and threats, to debauch his daughter Beatrice, who was now grown up, and exceedingly beautiful.* . . .

Beatrice, finding it impossible to continue to live in so miserable a manner, followed the example of her sister ; she sent a well-written supplication to the Pope, imploring him to exercise his authority in withdrawing her from the violence and cruelty of her father. But this petition, which might, if listened to, have saved this unfortunate girl from an early death, produced not the least effect. It was afterwards found among the collection of memorials, and it is pretended that it never came before the Pope.

Francesco, having discovered this attempt on the part of his daughter, became more enraged, and redoubled his tyranny ; confining with rigour not only Beatrice, but also his wife. At length these unhappy women, finding themselves without hope of relief, driven by desperation, resolved to plan his death.

The Palace Cenci was sometimes visited by a Monsignore Guerra—a young man of handsome person and attractive manners, and of that facile character which might easily be induced to become a partner in any action, good or evil as it might happen. His countenance was pleasing, and his person tall and well-proportioned. He was somewhat in love with Beatrice, and well acquainted with the turpitude of Francesco's character, and was hated by him on account of the familiar intercourse which subsisted between him and the children of this unnatural father : for this reason he timed his visits with caution, and never came to the house but when he knew that Francesco was absent. He was moved to a lively compassion of the state of Lucretia and Beatrice, who often related their increasing misery to him ; and his pity was for ever fed and augmented by some new tale of tyranny and cruelty. In one of these conversations Beatrice let fall some words which plainly indicated that she and her mother-in-law contemplated the murder of their tyrant ; and Monsignore Guerra not only showed approbation of their design, but also promised to co-operate with them in their undertaking. Thus stimulated, Beatrice communicated the design to her eldest brother, Giacomo, without whose concurrence it was impossible that they should succeed. This latter was easily drawn into consent, since he was utterly disgusted with his father, who ill-treated him, and refused to allow him a sufficient support for his wife and children.

The apartments of Monsignore Guerra were the place in which the circumstances of the crime about to be committed were concerted and determined on. Here Giacomo, with the understanding of his sister and mother-in-law, held various consultations, and finally resolved to commit the murder of Francesco to two of his vassals, who had become his inveterate enemies ; one called Marzio, and the other Olimpio : the latter, by means of Francesco, had been deprived of his post as castellan of the Rock of Petrella.

It was already well known that Francesco, with the permission of Signor Marzio di Colonna, baron of that feud, had resolved to retire to Petrella, and to pass the summer there with his family. Some banditti of the kingdom of Naples were hired, and were instructed to lie in wait in the woods about Petrella, and, upon advice being given to them of the approach of Francesco, to seize upon him. This scheme was so arranged that, although the robbers were only to seize and take off Francesco, yet his wife and children should not be suspected of being accomplices in the act. But the affair did not succeed ; for, as the banditti were not informed of his approach in time enough, Francesco arrived safe and sound at Petrella. They were obliged therefore to form some new scheme to obtain the end which every day made them more impatient to effect ; for Francesco still persisted in his wicked conduct. He, being an old man, above seventy years of age, never quitted the castle ; therefore no use could be

* The details here are horrible, and unfit for publication.

made of the banditti, who were still secreted in the environs. It was determined, therefore, to accomplish the murder in Francesco's own house.

Marzio and Olimpio were called to the castle; and Beatrice, accompanied by her mother-in-law, conversed with them from a window during the night-time, when her father slept. She ordered them to repair to Monsignore Guerra with a note in which they were desired to murder Francesco in consideration of a reward of a thousand crowns: a third to be given them before the act by Monsignore Guerra, and the other two-thirds by the ladies themselves after the deed should be accomplished. Having consented to this agreement, they were secretly admitted into the castle the 8th of September 1598; but, because this day was the anniversary of the birth of the Blessed Virgin, the Signora Lucretia, held back by her veneration for so holy a time, desired, with the consent of her daughter-in-law, that the execution of the murder should be put off until the following day. They dexterously mixed opium with the drink of Francesco, who, upon going to bed, was soon oppressed by a deep sleep. About midnight his daughter herself led the two assassins into the apartment of her father, and left them there that they might execute the deed they had undertaken; and retired to a chamber close by, where Lucretia remained also, expecting the return of the murderers, and the relation of their success. Soon after, the assassins entered, and told the ladies that pity had held them back, and that they could not overcome their repugnance to kill in cold blood a poor sleeping old man. These words filled Beatrice with anger; and, after having bitterly reviled them as cowards and traitors, she exclaimed, "Since you have not courage enough to murder a sleeping man, I will kill my father myself; but your lives shall not be long secure." The assassins, hearing this short but terrible threat, feared that, if they did not commit the deed, the tempest would burst over their own heads; took courage; and re-entered the chamber where Francesco slept, and with a hammer drove a nail into his head, making it pass by his eye, and another they drove into his neck. After a few struggles the unhappy Francesco breathed his last. The murderers departed, after having received the remainder of the promised reward; besides which, Beatrice gave Marzio a mantle trimmed with gold. After this the two ladies, after drawing out the two nails, enveloped the body in a fine sheet, and carried it to an open gallery that overhung a garden, and had underneath an elder-tree. From thence they threw it down; so that it might be believed that Francesco, attending a call of nature, was traversing this gallery, when, being only supported by feeble beams, it had given way, and thus had lost his life.

And so indeed was it believed the next day, when the feigned lamentations of Lucretia and Beatrice, who appeared inconsolable, spread the news of Francesco's death. He received an honourable burial; and his family, after a short stay at the castle, returned to Rome to enjoy the fruits of their crime. They passed some time there in tranquillity. But Divine Justice, which would not allow so atrocious a wickedness to remain hid and unpunished, so ordered it that the Court of Naples, to which the account of the death of Cenci was forwarded, began to entertain doubts concerning the mode by which he came by it, and sent a commissary to examine the body and to take informations. Among other things, this man discovered a circumstance to the prejudice of the family of the deceased: it appeared that, the day after the event of her father's death, Beatrice had given to wash a sheet covered with blood, saying: . . .

These informations were instantly forwarded to the Court of Rome. But nevertheless several months passed without any step being taken in disfavour of the Cenci family; and, in the meantime, the youngest son of Francesco died, and two only remained of the five that he had had; namely, Giacomo and Bernardo. Monsignore Guerra, having heard of the notification made by the Court of Naples to that of Rome, fearing that Marzio and Olimpio might fall into the hands of justice, and be induced to confess their crime, suddenly hired men to murder them, but succeeded only in assassinating Olimpio at the city of Terni. Marzio, who had escaped this misfortune, soon incurred that of being imprisoned at Naples, where he confessed the whole; and instantly, while the

arrival of Marzio at Rome from Naples was expected, Giacomo and Bernardo were arrested, and imprisoned in the Corte Savella, and Lucretia and Beatrice were confined in their own house under a good guard ; but afterwards they were also conducted to the prison where were the brothers. They were here examined, and all constantly denied the crime, and particularly Beatrice, who also denied having given to Marzio the mantle trimmed with gold, of which mention was before made ; and Marzio, overcome and moved by the presence of mind and courage of Beatrice, retracted all that he had deposed at Naples, and, rather than again confess, obstinately died under his torments.

There not being sufficient proof to justify putting the Cenci family to the torture, they were all transferred to Castello, where they remained several months in tranquillity. But, for their misfortune, one of the murderers of Olimpio at Terni fell into the hands of justice ; he confessed that he had been hired to this deed by Monsignore Guerra, who had also commissioned him to assassinate Marzio. Fortunately for this prelate, he received prompt information of the testimony given against him, and was able to hide himself for a time, and to plan his escape, which was very difficult ; for his stature, the fairness and beauty of his countenance, and his light hair, made him conspicuous for discovery. He changed his dress for that of a charcoal-man, blackening his face, and shaving his head. And thus disguised, driving two asses before him, with some bread and onions in his hands, he passed freely through Rome, under the eyes of the ministers of justice, who sought him everywhere ; and, without being recognized by any one, passed out of one of the gates of the city, where, after a short time, he was met by the sbirri who were searching the country, and passed unknown by them—not without suffering great fear at his risk of being discovered and arrested. By means of this ingenious disguise he effected his escape to a safe country.

The flight of Monsignore Guerra, joined to the confession of the murderer of Olimpio, aggravated the other proofs so much that the Cenci were re-transferred from Castello to Corte Savella, and were condemned to be put to the torture. The two sons sank vilely under their torments, and became convicted ; Lucretia, being of advanced age—having completed her fiftieth year—and being of a fat make, was not able to resist the torture of the cord—[*The original is wanting.*]—But the Signora Beatrice, being young, lively, and strong, neither with good nor ill treatment, with menaces nor fear of torture, would allow a single word to pass her lips which might inculcate her ; and even, by her lively eloquence, confused the judges who examined her. The Pope, being informed of all that passed by Signor Ulisse Moraci, the judge employed in this affair, became suspicious that the beauty of Beatrice had softened the mind of this judge, and committed the cause to another, who found out another mode of torment, called the torture of the hair ; and, when she was already tied under this torture, he brought before her her mother-in-law and brothers. They began all together to exhort her to confess ; saying that, since the crime had been committed, they must suffer the punishment. Beatrice, after some resistance, said, “ So you all wish to die, and to disgrace and ruin our house ? This is not right : but, since it so pleases you, so let it be.” And, turning to the jailors, she told them to unbind her, and that all the examinations might be brought to her, saying, “ That which I ought to confess, that will I confess ; that to which I ought to assent, to that will I assent ; and that which I ought to deny, that will I deny :”—and in this manner she was convicted without having confessed. They were then all unbound ; and, since it was now five months since all had met, they wished to eat together that day ; but three days afterwards they were again divided—the ladies being left in the Corte Savella, and the brothers being transferred to the dungeons of the Tordinona.

The Pope, after having seen all the examinations and the entire confessions, ordered that the delinquents should be drawn through the streets at the tails of horses, and afterwards decapitated. Many cardinals and princes interested themselves, and entreated that at least they might be allowed to draw up their defence. The Pope at first refused to comply, replying with severity, and asking

these intercessors what defence had been allowed to Francesco when he had been so barbarously murdered in his sleep ; but afterwards he yielded to allow them twenty-five days' time. The most celebrated Roman advocates undertook to defend the criminals ; and, at the end of the appointed time, brought their writings to the Pope. The first that spoke was the advocate Nicholas di Angelis ; but the Pope interrupted him angrily in the middle of his discourse, saying that he greatly wondered that there existed in Rome children unnatural enough to kill their father, and that there should be found advocates depraved enough to defend so horrible a crime. These words silenced all except the advocate Farinacci ; who said, " Holy Father, we have not fallen at your feet to defend the atrocity of the crime, but to save the life of the innocent, when your holiness will deign to hear us." The Pope listened patiently to him for four hours, and then, taking the writings, dismissed them. The advocate Altieri, who was the last to depart, turned back, and, throwing himself at the feet of the Pope, said that his office as advocate to the poor would not allow him to refuse to appear in this affair ; and the Pope replied that he was not surprised at the part that he, but at that which the others, had taken. Instead of retiring to rest, he spent the whole night in studying the cause with the Cardinal di San Marcello—noting with great care the most exculpating passages of the writing of the advocate Farinacci ; with which he became so satisfied that he gave hope of granting a pardon to the criminals. For the crimes of the father and children were contrasted and balanced in this writing ; and, to save the sons, the greater guilt was attributed to Beatrice ; and thus, by saving the mother-in-law, the daughter might the more easily escape, who was dragged, as it were, to the committing so enormous a crime by the cruelty of her father. The Pope, therefore, that the criminals might enjoy the benefit of time, ordered them again to be confined in secret. But, since by the high dispensation of Providence it was resolved that they should incur the just penalty of parricide, it so happened that at this time Paolo Santa Croce killed his mother in the town of Subiaco, because she refused to give up her inheritance to him. And the Pope, upon the occurrence of this second crime of this nature, resolved to punish those guilty of the first ; and the more so because the matricide Santa Croce had escaped from the vengeance of the law by flight. The Pope returned to Monte Cavallo the 6th of May, that he might consecrate the next morning, in the neighbouring church of S. Maria degli Angeli, the Cardinal Diverstiana, appointed by him to be bishop of Olumbré on the 3rd of May of the same year, 1599 : on the 10th of May he called into his presence Monsignore Ferrante Taverna, governor of Rome, and said to him, " I give up into your hands the Cenci cause, that you may, as soon as you can, execute the judgment allotted to them." As soon as the governor arrived at his palace, he communicated the sentence to, and held a council with, the criminal judge, concerning the manner of death to be inflicted on the criminals. Many nobles instantly hastened to the palaces of the Quirinal and the Vatican, to implore the grace of at least a private death for the ladies, and the pardon of the innocent Bernardo ; and fortunately they were in time to save the life of this youth, because many hours were necessarily employed in preparing the scaffold over the bridge of S. Angelo, and then in waiting for the Confraternity of Mercy, who were to accompany the condemned to the place of suffering.

The sentence was executed the morning of Saturday the 11th of May. The messengers charged with the communication of the sentence, and the Brothers of the Consorteria, were sent to the several prisons at five the preceding night ; and at six the sentence of death was communicated to the unhappy brothers while they were placidly sleeping. Beatrice on hearing it broke into a piercing lamentation, and into passionate gesture, exclaiming, " How is it possible, O my God, that I must so suddenly die ? " Lucretia, as prepared and already resigned to her fate, listened without terror to the reading of this terrible sentence, and with gentle exhortations induced her daughter-in-law to enter the chapel with her ; and the latter, whatever excess she might have indulged in on the first intimation of a speedy death, so much the more now courageously sup-

ported herself, and gave every one certain proofs of a humble resignation. Having requested that a notary might be allowed to come to her, and her request being granted, she made her will, in which she left 15,000 crowns to the Fraternity of the Sacre Stimmate, and willed that all her dowry should be employed in portioning for marriage fifty maidens; and Lucretia, imitating the example of her daughter-in-law, ordered that she should be buried in the church of S. Gregorio at Monte Celio, with 32,000 crowns for charitable uses, and made other legacies; after which they passed some time in the Consorteria, reciting psalms and litanies and other prayers with so much fervour that it well appeared that they were assisted by the peculiar grace of God. At eight o'clock they confessed, heard mass, and received the holy communion. Beatrice, considering that it was not decorous to appear before the judges and on the scaffold with their splendid dresses, ordered two dresses, one for herself and the other for her mother-in-law, made in the manner of the nuns—gathered up, and with long sleeves of black cotton for Lucretia, and of common silk for herself, with a large cord-girdle. When these dresses came, Beatrice rose, and, turning to Lucretia—"Mother," said she, "the hour of our departure is drawing near; let us dress therefore in these clothes, and let us mutually aid one another in this last office." Lucretia readily complied with this invitation, and they dressed, each helping the other, showing the same indifference and pleasure as if they were dressing for a feast.

The Company of Mercy arrived soon after at the prisons of the Tordinona; and, while they were waiting below in the street with the crucifix until the condemned should descend, an accident happened which gave rise to such a tumult among the immense crowd there collected that there was danger of much disorder. It thus happened: some foreign gentlemen, who were posted at a high window, inadvertently threw down a flower-pot which was outside the window, which, falling on one of the brothers of the Order of Mercy, mortally wounded him. This caused a disturbance in the crowd; and those who were too far off to know the cause took flight, and, falling one over the other, several were wounded. When the tumult was calmed, the brothers Giacomo and Bernardo descended to the door of the prison, near which opportunely happened to be some fiscal officers, who, going up to Bernardo, told him that, through the clemency of the sovereign pontiff, his life was spared to him, with this condition—that he should be present at the death of his relations. A scarlet mantle trimmed with gold, in which he had at first been conducted to prison, was given him, to envelop him. Giacomo was already on the car, when the *placet* of the Pope arrived, freeing him from the severer portion of the punishment added to the sentence, and ordering that it should be executed only by the hammer and quartering.

The funereal procession passed through the Via dell' Orso, by the Apollinara, thence through the Piazza Navona; from the church of S. Pantaleo to the Piazza Pollarola, through the Campo di Fiori, S. Carlo a Catinari, to the Arco de' Conti Cenci; proceeding, it stopped under the Palace Cenci, and then finally rested at the Corte Savella, to take the two ladies. When these arrived, Lucretia remained last, dressed in black, as has been described, with a veil of the same colour, which covered her as far as her girdle. Beatrice was beside her, also covered by a veil. They wore velvet slippers, with silk roses and gold fastenings; and, instead of manacles, their wrists were bound by a silk cord, which was fastened to their girdles in such a manner as to give them almost the free use of their hands. Each had in her left hand the holy sign of benediction, and in the right a handkerchief, with which Lucretia wiped her tears, and Beatrice the perspiration from her forehead. Being arrived at the place of punishment, Bernardo was left on the scaffold, and the others were conducted to the chapel. During this dreadful separation, this unfortunate youth, reflecting that he was soon going to behold the decapitation of his nearest relatives, fell down in a deadly swoon, from which, however, he was at last recovered, and seated opposite the block. The first that came forth to die was Lucretia, who, being fat, found difficulty in placing herself to receive the blow. The

executioner taking off her handkerchief, her neck was discovered, which was still handsome, although she was fifty years of age. Blushing deeply, she cast her eyes down, and then, casting them up to heaven, full of tears, she exclaimed, "Behold, dearest Jesus, this guilty soul about to appear before thee to give an account of its acts, mingled with many crimes. When it shall appear before thy Godhead, I pray thee to look on it with an eye of mercy, and not of justice." She then began to recite the psalm *Miserere mei Deus*; and, placing her neck under the axe, the head was struck from her body while she was repeating the second verse of this psalm, at the words *et secundum multitudinem*. When the executioner raised the head, the populace saw with wonder that the countenance long retained its vivacity, until it was wrapped up in a black handkerchief, and placed in a corner of the scaffold. While the scaffold was being arranged for Beatrice, and whilst the Brotherhood returned to the chapel for her, the balcony of a shop filled with spectators fell, and five of those underneath were wounded, so that two died a few days after. Beatrice, hearing the noise, asked the executioner if her mother had died well, and, being replied that she had, she knelt before the crucifix, and spoke thus: "Be thou everlastingly thanked, O my most gracious Saviour, since, by the good death of my mother, thou hast given me assurance of thy mercy towards me." Then, rising, she courageously and devoutly walked towards the scaffold, repeating by the way several prayers with so much fervour of spirit that all who heard her shed tears of compassion. Ascending the scaffold, while she arranged herself, she also turned her eyes to heaven, and thus prayed: "Most beloved Jesus, who, relinquishing thy divinity, becamest a man, and didst through love purge my sinful soul also of its original sin with thy precious blood; deign, I beseech thee, to accept that which I am about to shed, at thy most merciful tribunal, as a penalty which may cancel my many crimes, and spare me a part of that punishment justly due to me." Then she placed her head under the axe, which, at one blow, was divided from her body as she was repeating the second verse of the psalm *De profundis*, at the words *fiat aures tua*. The blow gave a violent motion to her body, and discomposed her dress. The executioner raised the head to the view of the people; and, in placing it in the coffin placed underneath, the cord by which it was suspended slipped from his hold, and the head fell to the ground, shedding a great deal of blood, which was wiped up with water and sponges.

On the death of his sister, Bernardo again fainted. The most efficacious remedies were for some time uselessly employed upon him; and it was believed by all that his second swoon, having found him already overcome and without strength, had deprived him of life. At length, after the lapse of a quarter of an hour, he came to himself, and by slow degrees recovered the use of his senses. Giacomo was then conducted to the scaffold, and the executioner took from him the mourning-cloak which enveloped him. He fixed his eyes on Bernardo, and then, turning, addressed the people with a loud voice: "Now that I am about to present myself before the tribunal of infallible Truth, I swear that, if my Saviour, pardoning me my faults, shall place me in the road to salvation, I will incessantly pray for the preservation of his Holiness, who has spared me the aggravation of punishment but too much due to my enormous crime, and has granted life to my brother Bernardo, who is most innocent of the guilt of parricide, as I have constantly declared in all my examinations. It only afflicts me in these my last moments that he should have been obliged to be present at so fatal a scene: but since, O my God, it has so pleased thee, *fiat voluntas tua*." After speaking thus, he knelt down. The executioner blinded his eyes, and tied his legs to the scaffold; gave him a blow on the temple with a leaded hammer; cut off his head; and cut his body into four pieces, which were fixed on the hooks of the scaffolding.

When the last penalty of justice was over, Bernardo was reconducted to the prison of the Tordinona, where he was soon attacked by a burning fever. He was bled, and received other remedies, so that in the end he recovered his health, though not without great suffering. The bodies of Lucretia and Beatrice

were left at the end of the bridge until the evening, illuminated by two torches, and surrounded by so great a concourse of people that it was impossible to cross the bridge. An hour after dark, the body of Beatrice was placed in a coffin, covered by a black velvet pall richly adorned with gold : garlands of flowers were placed, one at her head, and another at her feet ; and the body was strewed with flowers. It was accompanied to the church of S. Peter in Montorio by the Brotherhood of the Order of Mercy, and followed by many Franciscan monks, with great pomp and innumerable torches. She was there buried before the high altar, after the customary ceremony had been performed. By reason of the distance of the church from the bridge, it was four hours after dark before the ceremony was finished. Afterwards the body of Lucretia, accompanied in the same manner, was carried to the church of S. Gregorio upon the Celian hill ; where, after the ceremony, it was honourably buried.

Beatrice was rather tall, of a fair complexion, and she had a dimple on each cheek, which, especially when she smiled, added a grace to her lovely countenance that transported every one who beheld her. Her hair appeared like threads of gold ; and, because they were extremely long, she used to tie it up, and when afterwards she loosened it, the splendid ringlets dazzled the eyes of the spectator. Her eyes were of a deep blue, pleasing, and full of fire. To all these beauties she added, both in words and actions, a spirit and a majestic vivacity that captivated every one. She was twenty years of age when she died.

Lucretia was as tall as Beatrice, but her full make made her appear less : she was also fair, and so fresh-complexioned that at fifty, which was her age when she died, she did not appear above thirty. Her hair was black, and her teeth regular and white to an extraordinary degree.

Giacomo was of a middle size ; fair but ruddy, and with black eyebrows ; affable in his nature, of good address, and well skilled in every science and in all knightly exercises. He was not more than twenty-eight years of age when he died.

Lastly, Bernardo so closely resembled Beatrice in complexion, features, and everything else, that if they had changed clothes the one might easily have been taken for the other. His mind seemed formed in the same model as that of his sister ; and at the time of her death he was six-and-twenty years old.

He remained in the prison of Tordinona until the month of September of the same year ; after which time, at the intercession of the Most Venerable Grand Brotherhood of the Most Holy Crucifix of St. Marcellus, he obtained the favour of his liberty upon paying the sum of 25,000 crowns to the Hospital of the Most Holy Trinity of Pilgrims. Thus he, as the sole remnant of the Cenci family, became heir to all their possessions. He is now married, and has a son named Cristoforo.

The most faithful portrait of Beatrice exists in the Palace of the Villa Pamfili, without the gate of San Pancrazio : if any other is to be found in the Palazzo Cenci, it is not shown to any one ; so as not to renew the memory of so horrible an event.

This was the end of this family. And until the time when this account is put together it has not been possible to find the Marquis Paolo Santa Croce ; but there is a rumour that he dwells in Brescia, a city of the Venetian states.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.	ORSINO, a Prelate.
GIACOMO, } <i>his Sons.</i>	SAVELLA, the Pope's Legate.
BERNARDO, }	OLIMPIO, } <i>Assassins.</i>
CARDINAL CAMILLO.	MARZIO, }
PRINCE COLONNA. ¹	ANDREA, Servant to CENCI.
	<i>Nobles, Judges, Guards, Servants.</i>
	LUCRETIA, wife of CENCI, and stepmother of his children.
	BEATRICE, his daughter.

The SCENE lies principally in Rome, but changes during the Fourth Act to Petrella, a Castle among the Apulian Apennines.

TIME.—During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.*

Enter COUNT CENCI and CARDINAL CAMILLO.

Camillo. That matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point. He said that you
Bought perilous impunity with your gold;
That crimes like yours, if once or twice compounded,
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live;
But that the glory and the interest
Of the high throne he fills little consist
With making it a daily mart of guilt
So manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

Cenci. The third of my possessions—let it go!
Ay, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle:
I little thought he should outwit me so!
Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge
Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
The deed he saw could not have rated higher
Than his most worthless life:—it angers me!
“Respited me from hell!”—So may the Devil
Respite their souls from heaven! No doubt Pope Clement

And his most charitable nephews pray
That the Apostle Peter and the saints
Will grant for their sakes that I long enjoy
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days,
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
To which they show no title.

Camillo.

O Count Cenci!

So much that you might honourably live,¹
And reconcile yourself with your own heart,
And with your God, and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Through those snow-white and venerable hairs !
Your children should be sitting round you now,
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife ? Where is your gentle daughter ?
Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
Why is she barred from all society
But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs ?
Talk with me, Count ; you know I mean you well.
I stood beside your dark and fiery youth,
Watching its bold and bad career, as men
Watch meteors,—but it vanished not ; I marked
Your desperate and remorseless manhood ; now
Do I behold you, in dishonoured age,
Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,
And in that hope have saved your life three times.

Cenci. For which Aldobrandino owes you now
My fief beyond the Pincian.—Cardinal,
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
And so we shall converse with less restraint.
A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter.
He was accustomed to frequent my house ;
So the next day *his* wife and daughter came,
And asked if I had seen him ; and I smiled :—
I think they never saw him any more.

Camillo. Thou execrable man, beware !—

Cenci.

Of thee ?

Nay, this is idle :—we should know each other

As to my character for what men call crime,
 Seeing I please my senses as I list,
 And vindicate that right with force or guile,
 It is a public matter, and I care not
 If I discuss it with you. I may speak
 Alike to you and my own conscious heart;
 For you give out that you have half reformed me,
 Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent,
 If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt.
 All men delight in sensual luxury,
 All men enjoy revenge; and most exult
 Over the tortures they can never feel,
 Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
 But I delight in nothing else. I love
 The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,—
 When this shall be another's, and that mine.
 And I have no remorse, and little fear,
 Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
 This mood has grown upon me, until now
 Any design my captious fancy makes
 The picture of its wish (and it forms none
 But such as men like you would start to know)
 Is as my natural food and rest debarred
 Until it be accomplished.

Camillo. Art thou not
 Most miserable?

Cenci. Why miserable?
 No. I am what your theologians call
 "Hardened"; which they must be in impudence,
 So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
 True, I was happier than I am while yet
 Manhood remained to act the thing I thought,—
 While lust was sweeter than revenge. And now
 Invention palls; ay, we must all grow old.
 But that there yet remains a deed to act
 Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
 Duller than mine, I'd do—I know not what.
 When I was young I thought of nothing else
 But pleasure, and I fed on honey sweets.
 Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees,
 And I grew tired: yet, till I killed a foe,
 And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,

Knew I not what delight was else on earth,—
Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals ;
The dry fixed eyeball, the pale quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

Camillo. Hell's most abandoned fiend
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me !
I thank my God that I believe you not.

Enter ANDREA.

Andrea. My lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

Cenci. Bid him attend me in^t
The grand saloon. *[Exit ANDREA.]*

Camillo. Farewell ; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false impious words
Tempt not his Spirit to abandon thee. *[Exit CAMILLO.]*

Cenci. The third of my possessions !—I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursed sons ;
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,—
Hoping some accident might cut them off,
And meaning, if I could, to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them !
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned. Then, as to Beatrice—

[Looking around him suspiciously.]

I think they cannot hear me at that door :
What if they should ? And yet I need not speak,
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
O thou most silent air, that shalt not hear
What now I think ! thou pavement which I tread
Towards her chamber ! let your echoes talk
Of my imperious step, scorning surprise,
But not of my intent !—Andrea !

Enter ANDREA.

Andrea. My lord.

Cenci. Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening—no, at midnight ; and alone. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Garden of the Cenci Palace.*

Enter BEATRICE and ORSINO, as in conversation.

Beatrice. Pervert not truth,

Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation ;—nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress. Two long years are past
Since on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of Mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.

Orsino. You said you loved me then.

Beatrice. You are a priest :
Speak to me not of love.

Orsino. I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry.
Because I am a priest, do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep ?

Beatrice. As I have said, speak to me not of love.
Had *you* a dispensation, *I* have not ;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino ! all the love that once
I felt for you is turned to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And yet I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might ;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry :
You have a sly equivocating vein
That suits me not.—Ah wretched that I am !
Where shall I turn ? Even now you look on me
As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles

Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
 Ah no ! Forgive me. Sorrow makes me seem
 Sterner than else my nature might have been ;
 I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
 And they forbode—but what can they forebode
 Worse than I now endure ?

Orsino. All will be well.

Is the petition yet prepared ? You know
 My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice ;
 Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill
 So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

Beatrice. Your zeal for all I wish !—ah me ! you are cold !
 Your utmost skill !—Speak but one word—(*Aside*)—Alas !
 Weak and deserted creature that I am,
 Here I stand bickering with my only friend !
 (*To ORSINO.*) This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
 Orsino ; he has heard some happy news
 From Salamanca, from my brothers there ;
 And with this outward show of love he mocks
 His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,
 For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
 Which I have heard him pray for on his knees.
 Great God, that such a father should be mine !—
 But there is mighty preparation made,
 And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
 And all the chief nobility of Rome ;
 And he has bidden me and my pale mother
 Attire ourselves in festival array.
 Poor lady ! she expects some happy change
 In his dark spirit from this act ; I, none.
 At supper I will give you the petition :
 Till when—farewell.

Orsino.

Farewell.

[*Exit BEATRICE.*

I know the Pope

Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow
 But by absolving me from the revenue
 Of many a wealthy see ; and, Beatrice,
 I think to win thee at an easier rate.
 Nor shall he read her eloquent petition :
 He might bestow her on some poor relation
 Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,
 And I should be debarred from all access.

Then, as to what she suffers from her father,
 In all this there is much exaggeration.
 Old men are testy, and will have their way.
 A man may stab his enemy or his vassal,
 And live a free life as to wine or women,
 And with a peevish temper may return
 To a dull home, and rate his wife and children ;
 Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
 I shall be well content if on my conscience
 There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer,
 From the devices of my love—a net
 From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear
 Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
 Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve,
 And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
 My hidden thoughts.—Ah no ! A friendless girl,
 Who clings to me as to her only hope :—
 I were a fool, not less than if a panther
 Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,
 If she escape me. [Exit.

SCENE III.—*A magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace.*

*A Banquet. Enter CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, ORSINO,
 CAMILLO, NOBLES.*

Cenci. Welcome, my friends and kinsmen ; welcome ye,
 Princes and Cardinals, Pillars of the Church,
 Whose presence honours our festivity.
 I have too long lived like an anchorite,
 And, in my absence from your merry meetings,
 An evil word is gone abroad of me ;
 But I do hope that you, my noble friends,
 When you have shared the entertainment here,
 And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,
 And we have pledged a health or two together,
 Will think me flesh and blood as well as you ;
 Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
 But tender-hearted, meek, and pitiful.

First Guest. In truth, my lord, you seem too light of heart,
 Too sprightly and companionable a man,
 To act the deeds that rumour pins on you.

(*To his Companion.*) I never saw such blithe and open cheer
In any eye.

Second Guest. Some most desired event,
In which we all demand a common joy,
Has brought us hither ; let us hear it, Count.

Cenci. It is indeed a most desired event.
If, when a parent, from a parent's heart,
Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
And when he rises up from dreaming it,—
One supplication, one desire, one hope,—
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
Even all that he demands in their regard ;
And suddenly, beyond his dearest hope,
It is accomplished ; he should then rejoice,
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
And task their love to grace his merriment.
Then honour me thus far—for I am he. [dreadful ill

Beatrice (to LUCRETIA). Great God ! how horrible ! Some
Must have befallen my brothers !

Lucretia. Fear not, child ;
He speaks too frankly.

Beatrice. Ah ! my blood runs cold.
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

Cenci. Here are the letters brought from Salamanca ;
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God,
I thank thee ! In one night didst thou perform,
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons
Are dead.—Why, dead.—What means this change of cheer?
You hear me not, I tell you they are dead :
And they will need no food or raiment more ;
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
Rejoice with me—my heart is wondrous glad !
(*LUCRETIA sinks, half fainting ; BEATRICE supports her.*)

Beatrice. It is not true !—Dear lady, pray look up.
Had it been true,—there is a God in Heaven,
He would not live to boast of such a boon.
Unnatural man, thou know'st that it is false !

Cenci. Ay, as the word of God ; whom here I call
 To witness that I speak the sober truth :
 And whose most favouring providence was shown
 Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
 Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
 When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy ;
 The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
 Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,
 Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival.
 All in the self-same hour of the same night ;
 Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
 I beg those friends who love me that they mark
 The day a feast upon their calendars.
 It was the twenty-seventh of December :
 Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.

[The assembly appears confused ; several of the guests rise.]

First Guest. Oh horrible ! I will depart !

Second Guest.

And I !

Third Guest. No, stay !

I do believe it is some jest ; though, faith !

'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.

I think his son has married the Infanta,

Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado.

'Tis but to season some such news ; stay, stay !

I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.

Cenci (filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up).

O thou bright wine, whose purple splendour leaps

And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl

Under the lamplight, as my spirits do

To hear the death of my accursed sons !

Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,

Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,

And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in hell ;

Who, if a father's curses, as men say,

Climb with swift wings after his children's souls,¹

And drag them from the very throne of heaven,

Now triumphs in my triumph !—But thou art

Superfluous ; I have drunken deep of joy,

And I will taste no other wine tonight.

Here, Andrea ! Bear the bowl around.

A Guest (rising).

Thou wretch !

Will none among this noble company

Check the abandoned villain ?

Camillo. For God's sake,
Let me dismiss the guests ! You are insane !
Some ill will come of this.

Second Guest. Seize, silence him !

First Guest. I will !

Third Guest. And I !

Cenci (addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture).

Who moves ? Who speaks ? [*Turning to the company.*

'Tis nothing,

Enjoy yourselves.—Beware ! for my revenge
Is as the sealed commission of a king,
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

[*The Banquet is broken up ; several of the Guests are departing.*

Beatrice. I do entreat you, go not, noble guests.
What although tyranny and impious hate
Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair ?
What if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them and triumphs ? What if we,
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound
To love and shelter ? Shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless wide world ?
Oh think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
First love, then reverence, in a child's prone mind,
Till it thus vanquish shame and fear ! Oh think !
I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement ;
Have excused much ; doubted ; and, when no doubt
Remained, have sought by patience, love, and tears,
To soften him ; and, when this could not be,
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights,
And lifted up to God the Father of all
Passionate prayers ; and, when these were not heard,
I have still borne ;—until I meet you here,
Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,
His wife remains and I,—whom if ye save not,
Ye may soon share such merriment again
As fathers make over their children's graves.
O Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman ;
Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain ;

Camillo, thou art chief Justiciary ;—
Take us away !—

Cenci. (He has been conversing with CAMILLO during the first part of BEATRICE'S speech ; he hears the conclusion, and now advances.)

I hope my good friends here
Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps
Of their own throats—before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

Beatrice (not noticing the words of *Cenci*)

Dare not one look on me ?

None answer ? Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men ?
Or is it that I sue not in some form
Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit ?
O God ! that I were buried with my brothers !
And that the flowers of this departed Spring
Were fading on my grave ! and that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all !

Camillo. A bitter wish for one so young and gentle ;
Can we do nothing ?

Colonna.

Nothing that I see.

Count *Cenci* were a dangerous enemy :
Yet I would second any one.

A Cardinal.

And I.

Cenci. Retire to your chamber, insolent girl !

Beatrice. Retire thou, impious man ! Ay, hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more !
Wouldst thou have honour and obedience,
Who art a torturer ? Father, never dream,
Though thou mayst overbear this company,
But ill must come of ill.—Frown not on me !
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat !
Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step :
Seek out some dark and silent corner ; there
Bow thy white head before offended God,—
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

Cenci. My friends, I do lament this insane girl
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.

Good night, farewell ; I will not make you longer
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.

Another time.— [*Exeunt all but CENCI and BEATRICE.*

My brain is swimming round ;

Give me a bowl of wine.

(*To BEATRICE.*) Thou painted viper !

Beast that thou art ! Fair and yet terrible !

! know a charm shall make thee meek and tame.

Now get thee from my sight ! [*Exit BEATRICE.*

Here, Andrea,

Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said

I would not drink this evening, but I must ;

For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail

With thinking what I have decreed to do. [*Drinking the wine.*

Be thou the resolution of quick youth

Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,

And age's firm, cold, subtle villany ;

As if thou wert indeed my children's blood

Which I did thirst to drink.—The charm works well ;—

It must be done, it shall be done, I swear ! [*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.**Enter* LUCRETIA and BERNARDO.

Lucretia. Weep not, my gentle boy ; he struck but me,
 Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
 Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
 O God Almighty, do thou look upon us !
 We have no other friend but only thee.
 Yet weep not ; though I love you as my own,
 I am not your true mother.

Bernardo. Oh more, more
 Than ever mother was to any child,
 That have you been to me ! Had he not been
 My father, do you think that I should weep ?

Lucretia. Alas ! poor boy, what else couldst thou have done ?

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice (in a hurried voice). Did he pass this way ? Have
 you seen him, brother ?

Ah no ! that is his step upon the stairs ;
 'Tis nearer now ; his hand is on the door !
 Mother, if I to thee have ever been
 A duteous child, now save me ! Thou great God,
 Whose image upon earth a father is,
 Dost thou indeed abandon me ? He comes—
 The door is opening now ! I see his face ;
 He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,
 Even as he did after the feast last night ! [*Enter a Servant.*
 Almighty God, how merciful thou art !
 'Tis but Orsino's servant.—Well, what news ?

Servant. My master bids me say the Holy Father
 Has sent back your petition thus unopened ; [*Giving a paper.*
 And he demands at what hour 'twere secure
 To visit you again.

Lucretia. At the Ave Mary. [*Exit Servant.*
 So, daughter, our last hope has failed. Ah me !
 How pale you look ! you tremble, and you stand
 Rapt in some fixed and fearful meditation,
 As if one thought were over-strong for you.

Your eyes have a chill glare ! O dearest child,
Are you gone mad ? If not, pray speak to me !

Beatrice. You see I am not mad ; I speak to you.

Lucretia. You talked of something that your father did
After that dreadful feast. Could it be worse
Than when he smiled, and cried " My sons are dead ! "
And every one looked in his neighbour's face
To see if others were as white as he ?
At the first word he spoke, I felt the blood
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance.
And, when it passed, I sat all weak and wild ;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
Checked his unnatural pride ; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.
Until this hour thus you have ever stood
Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence ; your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence.
What can have thus subdued it ? What can now
Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear ?

Beatrice. What is it that you say ? I was just thinking
'Twere better not to struggle any more.
Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody,
Yet never—Oh before worse comes of it,
'Twere wise to die ! it ends in that at last.

Lucretia. Oh talk not so, dear child ! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you ?
He stayed not, after that accursed feast,
One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

Bernardo. O sister, sister, prithee speak to us !

Beatrice (*speaking very slowly with a forced calmness*). It
was one word, mother, one little word ;
One look, one smile. [*Wildly.*

Oh he has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks ! And he has given us all
Ditch-water, and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten. He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,—

And I have never yet despaired—But now !

What would I say ?

[*Recovering herself.*]

Ah no, 'tis nothing new.

The sufferings we all share have made me wild.

He only struck and cursed me as he passed :

He said, he looked, he did—nothing at all

Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.

Alas ! I am forgetful of my duty :

I should preserve my senses for your sake.

Lucretia. Nay, Beatrice ; have courage, my sweet girl.

If any one despairs, it should be I,

Who loved him once, and now must live with him

Till God in pity call for him or me.

For you may, like your sister, find some husband,

And smile, years hence, with children round your knees ;

Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil,

Shall be remembered only as a dream.

Beatrice. Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.

Did you not nurse me when my mother died ?

Did you not shield me and that dearest boy ?

And had we any other friend but you

In infancy, with gentle words and looks,

To win our father not to murder us ?

And shall I now desert you ? May the ghost

Of my dead mother plead against my soul,

If I abandon her who filled the place

She left, with more even than a mother's love !

Bernardo. And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed,

I would not leave you in this wretchedness,

Even though the Pope should make me free to live

In some blithe place, like others of my age,

With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.

Oh never think that I will leave you, mother !

Lucretia. My dear, dear children !

Enter CENCI, suddenly.

Cenci.

What ! Beatrice here ?

Come hither.

[*She shrinks back, and covers her face.*]

Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair ;

Look up ! Why, yesternight you dared to look

With disobedient insolence upon me,

Bending a stern and an enquiring brow

On what I meant ; whilst I then sought to hide

That which I came to tell you—but in vain.

Beatrice (wildly, staggering towards the door). Oh that the earth would gape! Hide me, O God!

Cenci. Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you! From this day and hour,
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind:
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber.
Thou too [*To BERNARDO*], loathed image of thy cursed mother:
Thy milky meek face makes me sick with hate!

[*Exeunt BEATRICE and BERNARDO.*]

(*Aside.*) So much has passed between us as must make
Me bold, her fearful. 'Tis an awful thing
To touch such mischief as I now conceive:
So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,
And try the chill stream with their feet; once in—
How the delighted spirit pants for joy!

Lucretia (advancing timidly towards him). O husband! Pray
forgive poor Beatrice,—
She meant not any ill.

Cenci. Nor you perhaps?
Nor that young imp whom you have taught by rote
Parricide with his alphabet? Nor Giacomo?
Nor those two most unnatural sons who stirred
Enmity up against me with the Pope,
Whom in one night merciful God cut off?
Innocent lambs! they thought not any ill!
You were not here conspiring? You said nothing
Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;
Or be condemned to death for some offence,
And you would be the witnesses? this failing,
How just it were to hire assassins, or
Put sudden poison in my evening drink?
Or smother me when overcome by wine?—
Seeing we had no other judge but God,
And he had sentenced me, and there were none
But you to be the executioners
Of his decree enregistered in heaven.
Oh no! you said not this?

Lucretia. So help me God,
I never thought the things you charge me with !

Cenci. If you dare speak that wicked lie again,
I'll kill you. What ! it was not by your counsel
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night ?
You did not hope to stir some enemies
Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn
What every nerve of you now trembles at ?
You judged that men were bolder than they are ;
Few dare to stand between their grave and me !

Lucretia. Look not so dreadfully ! By my salvation,
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed ;
Nor do I think she designed anything
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

Cenci. Blaspheming liar ! You are damned for this !
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you :
For men shall there be none but those who dare
All things,—not question that which I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out. You know
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella.
'Tis safely walled, and moated roundabout :
Its dungeons underground and its thick towers
Never told tales ; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak. Why do you linger ?
Make speediest preparation for the journey. [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
The all-beholding sun yet shines ; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets ;
I see the bright sky through the window-panes.
It is a garish, broad, and peering day ;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears ;
And every little corner, nook, and hole,
Is penetrated with the insolent light.
Come, darkness ! Yet what is the day to me ?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day ?
'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror : if there be a sun in heaven,
She shall not dare to look upon its beams,
Nor feel its warmth. Let her, then, wish for night.
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me : I bear a darker deadlier gloom

Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air,
Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose.—Would that it were done ! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Vatican.*

Enter CAMILLO and GIACOMO, in conversation.

Camillo. There is an obsolete and doubtful law,
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing. . . .

Giacomo. Nothing more? Alas !
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and aged sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained in no highborn necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities ;
He has wide wants and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
An hundred servants and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require?—

Camillo. Nay, there is reason in your plea ; 'twere hard.

Giacomo. 'Tis hard for a firm man to bear. But I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father
Without a bond or witness to the deed ;
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world ;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
Do you not think the Pope would interpose,
And stretch authority beyond the law ?

Camillo. Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check
Your father's cruel hand. He frowned and said :
"Children are disobedient, and they sting

Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
 Requiting years of care with contumely.
 I pity the Count Cenci from my heart ;
 His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
 And thus he is exasperated to ill.

In the great war between the old and young,
 I, who have white hairs and a tottering body
 Will keep at least blameless neutrality." [Enter ORSINO.
 You, my good lord Orsino, heard those words.

Orsino. What words ?

Giacomo. Alas ! repeat them not again.—

There then is no redress for me ; at least
 None but that which I may achieve myself,
 Since I am driven to the brink. But say,—
 My innocent sister and my only brother
 Are dying underneath my father's eye.
 The memorable torturers of this land,
 Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
 Never inflicted on their meanest slave
 What these endure ; shall they have no protection ?

Camillo. Why, if they would petition to the Pope,
 I see not how he could refuse it. Yet
 He holds it of most dangerous example
 In aught to weaken the paternal power,
 Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.—
 I pray you now excuse me. I have business
 That will not bear delay.

[Exit CAMILLO.

Giacomo. But you, Orsino,
 Have the petition ; wherefore not present it ?

Orsino. I have presented it, and backed it with
 My earnest prayers and urgent interest :
 It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
 But that the strange and execrable deeds
 Alleged in it—in truth, they might well baffle
 Any belief—have turned the Pope's displeasure
 Upon the accusers from the criminal :
 So I should guess from what Camillo said.

Giacomo. My friend, that palace-walking devil, Gold,
 Has whispered silence to his Holiness.
 And we are left as scorpions ringed with fire :
 What should we do but strike ourselves to death ?
 For he who is our murderous persecutor

Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would— [Stops abruptly.

Orsino. What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover.
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves ;
A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree ;
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile ;
A father who is all a tyrant seems ;
Were the profaner for his sacred name.

Giacomo. Ask me not what I think ! The unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not ; and we trust
Imagination with such fantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words ;
Which have no words—their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye. My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.

Orsino. But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind,
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day,
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected—

Giacomo. Spare me now.
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he,
As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer.
I know thou art my friend ;¹ and all I dare
Speak to my soul, that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.
Pardon me that I say farewell—farewell.
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.

Orsino. Farewell !—Be your thoughts better—or more bold.
I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo [Exit GIACOMO.
To feed his hope with cold encouragement.
It fortunately serves my close designs
That 'tis a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets : for it tempts our powers,

Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes.
So Cenci fell into the pit : even I—
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun—
Show a poor figure to my own esteem,
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
As little mischief as I can ; that thought
Shall fee the accuser Conscience.

[*After a pause.*

Now what harm

If Cenci should be murdered?— Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me? And what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
In such an action? Of all earthly things,
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words ;
And such is Cenci : and, while Cenci lives,
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
If a priest wins her.—O fair Beatrice !
Would that I loved thee not, or, loving thee,
Could but despise danger, and gold, and all
That frowns between my wish and its effect,
Or smiles beyond it !—There is no escape.
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,—
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire ;
And, if I strike my damp and dizzy head,
My hot palm scorches it : her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant ; and thus unprofitably
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights,
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours :
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all :
Her father dead ; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave ;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating
From the dread manner of her wish achieved :
And she !—Once more take courage, my faint heart ;

What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee?
I have such foresight as assures success.
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions ; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts,
Till it become his slave—as I will do. [Exit.

ACT III.

SCENE I:—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.*LUCRETIA; *to her enter BEATRICE (she enters staggering, and speaks wildly).*

Beatrice. Reach me that handkerchief!—My brain is hurt,
My eyes are full of blood; just wipe them for me—
I see but indistinctly.—

Lucretia. My sweet child,
You have no wound; 'tis only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow.—Alas! alas!
What has befallen?

Beatrice. How comes this hair undone?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast.—Oh horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! the walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels!—My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! the air
Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe
In charnel-pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me—'tis substantial, heavy, thick;
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another,
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
My God! I never knew what the mad felt
Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt! [*More wildly.*
No, I am dead! These putrefying limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
Which would burst forth into the wandering air! [*A pause.*
What hideous thought was that I had even now?
'Tis gone; and yet its burden remains here,
O'er these dull eyes—upon this weary heart!
Oh world! oh life! oh day! oh misery!

Lucretia. What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not
Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,

But not its cause ; suffering has dried away
The source from which it sprung.

Beatrice (frantically). Like Parricide,
Misery has killed its father ; yet its father
Never like mine—O God ! what thing am I ?

Lucretia. My dearest child, what has your father done ?

Beatrice (doubtfully). Who art thou, questioner ? I have
no father.

(Aside.) She is the madhouse-nurse who tends on me ;
It is a piteous office. [*To LUCRETIA, in a slow subdued voice.*

Do you know,
I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair ;
At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams
That I imagined—no, it cannot be !
Horrible things have been in this wild world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill ; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed

As— [*Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.*

Who art thou ? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed
Thou art not what thou seemest—Mother !

Lucretia. Oh

My sweet child ! know you—

Beatrice. Yet speak it not :

For then, if this be truth, that other too
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.

Why, so it is. This is the Cenci Palace ;
Thou art Lucretia ; I am Beatrice.

I have talked some wild words, but will no more.

Mother, come near me : from this point of time,

I am— [*Her voice dies away faintly.*

Lucretia. Alas ! what has befallen thee, child ?

What has thy father done ?

Beatrice. What have I done?
 Am I not innocent? Is it my crime
 That one with white hair and imperious brow,
 Who tortured me from my forgotten years
 As parents only dare, should call himself
 My father, yet should be—Oh what am I?
 What name, what place, what memory, shall be mine?
 What retrospects, outliving even despair?

Lucretia. He is a violent tyrant, surely, child:
 We know that death alone can make us free,—
 His death or ours. But what can he have done
 Of deadlier outrage or worse injury?
 Thou art unlike thyself; thine eyes shoot forth
 A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,—
 Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine
 With one another.

Beatrice. 'Tis the restless life
 Tortured within them. If I try to speak,
 I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done;
 What, yet I know not—something which shall make
 The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
 In the dread lightning which avenges it;
 Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying
 The consequence of what it cannot cure.
 Some such thing is to be endured or done:
 When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
 And never anything will move me more.
 But now!—O blood, which art my father's blood,
 Circling through these contaminated veins,
 If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
 Couldst wash away the crime and punishment
 By which I suffer—no, that cannot be!
 Many might doubt there were a God above,
 Who sees and permits evil, and so die:
 That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

Lucretia. It must indeed have been some bitter wrong:
 Yet what I dare not guess. Oh my lost child,
 Hide not in proud impenetrable grief
 Thy sufferings from my fear!

Beatrice. I hide them not.
 What are the words which you would have me speak?
 I, who can feign no image in my mind

Of that which has transformed me—I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up
In its own formless horror ! Of all words
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear ? for there is none to tell
My misery. If another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death ! death ! our law and our religion call thee
A punishment, and a reward—Oh which
Have I deserved ?

Lucretia. The peace of innocence,
Till in your season you be called to heaven.
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

Beatrice. Ay, death
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of thy Spirit,
As a foul den from which what thou abhorrest
May mock thee, unavenged—it shall not be !
Self-murder—no : that might be no escape,
For thy decree yawns like a hell between
Our will and it.—Oh in this mortal world
There is no vindication and no law
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that through which I suffer !

Enter ORSINO.

(*She approaches him solemnly.*) Welcome, friend !
I have to tell you that, since last we met,
I have endured a wrong so great and strange
That neither life nor death can give me rest.
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

Orsino. And what is he who has thus injured you ?

Beatrice. The man they call my father : a dread name.

Orsino. It cannot be—

Beatrice. What it can be, or not,

Forbear to think. It is, and it has been ;
 Advise me how it shall not be again.
 I thought to die ; but a religious awe
 Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
 Might be no refuge from the consciousness
 Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh speak !

Orsino. Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
 Avenge thee.

Beatrice. O ice-hearted counsellor !
 If I could find a word that might make known
 The crime of my destroyer ; and, that done,
 My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
 Which cankers my heart's core—ay, lay all bare,
 So that my unpolluted fame should be
 With vilest gossips a stale-mouthèd story,
 A mock, a by-word, an astonishment :—
 If this were done, which never shall be done,
 Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate
 And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
 Baffling belief and overpowering speech ;
 Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapped
 In hideous hints.—Oh most assured redress !

Orsino. You will endure it then ?

Beatrice. Endure !—Orsino,
 It seems your counsel is small profit.

[Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.

Ay,

All must be suddenly resolved and done.
 What is this undistinguishable mist
 Of thoughts which rise, like shadow after shadow,
 Darkening each other ?

Orsino. Should the offender live ?
 Triumph in his misdeed ? and make by use
 His crime, whate'er it is (dreadful, no doubt),
 Thine element ? until thou mayst become
 Utterly lost, subdued even to the hue
 Of that which thou permittest.

Beatrice (to herself). Mighty Death !
 Thou double-visaged shadow ! only judge !
 Rightfullest arbiter ! *[She retires, absorbed in thought.*

Lucretia. If the lightning¹
 Of God has e'er descended to avenge—

Orsino. Blaspheme not! His high providence commits
Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs,
Into the hands of men; if *they* neglect
To punish crime—

Lucretia. But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock with gold opinion, law, and power?
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? if, because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange, and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief . . . O God!
If, for the very reasons which should make
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer?

Orsino. Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.

Lucretia. How?
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not—but I think it might be good
To—

Orsino. Why, his late outrage to Beatrice;
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her
Only one duty, how she may avenge;
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel—

Lucretia. For we cannot hope
That aid or retribution or resource
Will arise thence where every other one
Might find them with less need. [BEATRICE advances.

Orsino. Then—

Beatrice. Peace, Orsino!
And, honoured lady, while I speak, I pray
That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life,
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement, both for what is past,

And lest I be reserved, day after day,
 To load with crimes an overburdened soul,
 And be—what ye can dream not. I have prayed
 To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
 And have unravelled my entangled will,
 And have at length determined what is right.
 'Art thou my friend, Orsino? False or true?
 Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

Orsino. I swear
 To dedicate my cunning and my strength,
 My silence, and whatever else is mine,
 To thy commands.

Lucretia. You think we should devise
 His death?

Beatrice. And execute what is devised,
 And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.

Orsino. And yet most cautious.

Lucretia. For the jealous laws
 Would punish us with death and infamy
 For that which it became themselves to do.

Beatrice. Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,
 What are the means?

Orsino. I know two dull fierce outlaws
 Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
 Would trample out, for any slight caprice,
 The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
 Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
 What we now want.

Lucretia. Tomorrow, before dawn,
 Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
 Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.
 If he arrive there—

Beatrice. He must not arrive.

Orsino. Will it be dark before you reach the tower?

Lucretia. The sun will scarce be set.

Beatrice. But I remember,
 Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
 Crosses a deep ravine; 'tis rough and narrow,
 And winds with short turns down the precipice.
 And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
 Which has, from unimaginable years,
 Sustained itself with terror and with toil

Over a gulf, and with the agony
 With which it clings seems slowly coming down ;
 Even as a wretched soul hour after hour
 Clings to the mass of life ; yet, clinging, leans ;
 And, leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
 In which it fears to fall. Beneath this crag,
 Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
 The melancholy mountain yawns. Below,
 You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
 Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
 Crosses the chasm ; and high above there grow,
 With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
 Cedars and yews and pines, whose tangled hair
 Is matted in one solid roof of shade
 By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here
 'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

Orsino. Before you reach that bridge, make some excuse
 For spurring-on your mules, or loitering
 Until—

Beatrice. What sound is that ?

Lucretia. Hark ! No, it cannot be a servant's step ;
 It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
 Returned.—Make some excuse for being here.

Beatrice (to ORSINO as she goes out). That step we hear
 approach must never pass
 The bridge of which we spoke.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.]

Orsino. What shall I do ?

Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
 The imperious inquisition of his looks
 As to what brought me hither ! Let me mask
 Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

Enter GIACOMO in a hurried manner.

How ! Have you ventured hither ? Know you then
 That Cenci is from home ?

Giacomo. I sought him here ;
 And now must wait till he returns.

Orsino. Great God !
 Weigh you the danger of this rashness ?

Giacomo. Ay !
 Does my destroyer know his danger ? We
 Are now no more, as once, parent and child,

But man to man—the oppressor to the oppressed—
 The slanderer to the slandered—foe to foe.
 He has cast Nature off which was his shield,
 And Nature casts him off who is her shame ;
 And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
 Which I will shake ? and say, " I ask not gold ;
 I ask not happy years ; nor memories
 Of tranquil childhood ; nor home-sheltered love ;
 Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more ;—
 But only my fair fame ; only one hoard
 Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
 Under the penury heaped on me by thee ;
 Or I will " . . . God can understand and pardon :
 Why should I speak with man ?

Orsino.

Be calm, dear friend.

Giacomo. Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.

This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
 Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,
 And then denied the loan ; and left me so
 In poverty, the which I sought to mend
 By holding a poor office in the state.
 It had been promised to me, and already
 I bought new clothing for my ragged babes,—
 And my wife smiled, and my heart knew repose ;
 When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
 Conferred this office on a wretch whom thus
 He paid for vilest service. I returned
 With this ill news, and we sate sad together,
 Solacing our despondency with tears
 Of such affection and unbroken faith
 As temper life's worst bitterness ; when he,
 As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
 Mocking our poverty, and telling us
 Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
 And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
 I spoke of my wife's dowry ; but he coined
 A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
 The sum in secret riot ; and he saw
 My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
 And, when I knew the impression he had made,
 And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
 My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,

I went forth too : but soon returned again.
 Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
 My children her harsh thoughts ; and they all cried,
 "Give us clothes, father ! Give us better food !
 What you in one night squander were enough
 For months !" I looked, and saw that home was hell.
 And to that hell will I return no more,
 Until mine enemy has rendered up
 Atonement, or, as he gave life to me,
 I will, reversing Nature's law—

Orsino.

Trust me,

The compensation which thou seekest here
 Will be denied.

Giacomo.

Then—Are you not my friend ?

Did you not hint at the alternative
 Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
 The other day when we conversed together ?
 My wrongs were then less. That word "Parricide,"
 Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.

Orsino. It must be fear itself, for the bare word
 Is hollow mockery. Mark how wisest God
 Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
 So sanctifying it : what you devise
 Is, as it were, accomplished.

Giacomo.

Is he dead ?

Orsino. His grave is ready. Know that, since we met,
 Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.

Giacomo. What outrage ?

Orsino.

That she speaks not, but you may

Conceive such half-conjectures as I do,
 From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief
 Of her stern brow bent on the idle air,
 And her severe unmodulated voice,
 Drowning both tenderness and dread ; and last
 From this :—That whilst her stepmother and I,
 Bewildered in our horror, talked together
 With obscure hints (both self-misunderstood,
 And darkly guessing, stumbling in our talk
 Over the truth, and yet to its revenge),
 She interrupted us, and with a look
 Which told, before she spoke it, "He must die"—

Giacomo. It is enough. My doubts are well appeased.

There is a higher reason for the act
 Than mine ; there is a holier judge than me,
 A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,
 Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
 Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
 A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
 With needless tears ! fair sister, thou in whom
 Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
 Did not destroy each other ! is there made
 Ravage of thee ? O heart, I ask no more
 Justification !—Shall I wait, Orsino,
 Till he return, and stab him at the door ?

Orsino. Not so ; some accident might interpose
 To rescue him from what is now most sure ;
 And you are unprovided where to fly,
 How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen :
 All is contrived ; success is so assured
 That—

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice. 'Tis my brother's voice ! You know me not ?

Giacomo. My sister, my lost sister !

Beatrice. Lost indeed !

I see Orsino has talked with you, and
 That you conjecture things too horrible
 To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,—
 He might return. Yet kiss me ; I shall know
 That then thou hast consented to his death.
 Farewell, farewell ! Let piety to God,
 Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
 And all things that make tender hardest hearts,
 Make thine hard, brother ! Answer not—farewell.

[Exeunt severally.]

SCENE II.—*A mean Apartment in GIACOMO'S House.*

GIACOMO alone.

Giacomo. 'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.

[Thunder, and the sound of a storm.]

What ! can the everlasting elements
 Feel with a worm like man ? If so, the shaft
 Of mercy-winged lightning would not fall
 On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep :

They are now living in unmeaning dreams :
 But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
 Be just which was most necessary. Oh
 Thou un replenished lamp, whose narrow fire
 Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge
 Devouring darkness hovers ! thou small flame,
 Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
 Still flickerest up and down ! how very soon,
 Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail, and be
 As thou hadst never been ! So wastes and sinks,
 Even now perhaps, the life that kindled mine :
 But that no power can fill with vital oil,
 That broken lamp of flesh. Ha ! 'tis the blood
 Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold ;
 It is the form that moulded mine that sinks
 Into the white and yellow spasms of death ;
 It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
 In God's immortal likeness which now stands
 Naked before Heaven's judgment-seat ! *[A bell strikes.*
One ! Two !

The hours crawl on ; and, when my hairs are white,
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
 Tortured between just hate and vain remorse ;
 Chiding the tardy messenger of news
 Like those which I expect. I almost wish
 He be not dead, although my wrongs are great ;
 Yet—'Tis Orsino's step.

Enter ORSINO.

Speak !

Orsino.

I am come

To say he has escaped.

Giacomo.

Escaped !

Orsino.

And safe

Within Petrella. He passed by the spot
 Appointed for the deed, an hour too soon.

Giacomo. Are we the fools of such contingencies ?
 And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
 The hours when we should act ? Then wind and thunder,
 Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter
 With which Heaven mocks our weakness ! I henceforth
 Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done,
 But my repentance.

Orsino. See, the lamp is out.

Giacomo. If no remorse is ours when the dim air
Has drank this innocent flame, why should we quail
When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits
See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever?
No, I am hardened.

Orsino. Why, what need of this?
Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Although our first plan failed,
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp; let us not talk i' the dark.

Giacomo (lighting the lamp). And yet, once quenched,
I cannot thus relume
My father's life: do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God?

Orsino. Once gone,
You cannot now recall your sister's peace;
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope;
Nor your wife's bitter words; nor all the taunts
Which from the prosperous weak misfortune takes;
Nor your dead mother; nor—

Giacomo. Oh speak no more!
I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it!

Orsino. There is no need of that. Listen. You know
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time,—him whom your father
Degraded from his post? and Marzio,
That desperate wretch whom he deprived last year
Of a reward of blood well earned and due?

Giacomo. I knew Olimpio; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.

Orsino. Marzio's hate
Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men—
But in your name, and as at your request—
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

Giacomo. Only to talk?

Orsino. The moments which even now
Pass onward to tomorrow's midnight hour
May memorize their flight with death. Ere then

They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end—

Giacomo. Listen ! What sound is that ?

Orsino. The house-dog moans, and the beams crack :
nought else.

Giacomo. It is my wife complaining in her sleep.
I doubt not she is saying bitter things
Of me ; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.

Orsino. Whilst he
Who truly took it from them, and who fills
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.

Giacomo. If e'er he wakes
Again, I will not trust to hireling hands—

Orsino. Why, that were well. I must be gone ; good-night !
When next we meet . . .

Giacomo. May all be done,—and all
Forgotten ! Oh that I had never been ! [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.--*An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella.**Enter CENCI.*

Cenci. She comes not ; yet I left her even now
 Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty
 Of her delay. Yet what if threats are vain ?
 Am I not now within Petrella's moat ?
 Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome ?
 Might I not drag her by the golden hair ?
 Stamp on her ? keep her sleepless till her brain
 Be overworn ? tame her with chains and famine ?
 Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
 What I most seek ! No, 'tis her stubborn will
 Which, by its own consent, shall stoop as low
 As that which drags it down.

Enter LUCRETIA.

Thou loathèd wretch !
 Hide thee from my abhorrence ; fly, begone !
 Yet stay—Bid Beatrice come hither.

Lucretia.

Oh

Husband ! I pray, for thine own wretched sake,
 Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
 Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,
 Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
 And thou art old ; thy hairs are hoary grey.
 As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,
 Pity thy daughter ; give her to some friend
 In marriage ; so that she may tempt thee not
 To hatred,—or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

Cenci. What ! like her sister, who has found a home
 To mock my hate from with prosperity ?
 Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee,
 And all that yet remain. My death may be
 Rapid ; her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
 Bid her come hither, and before my mood
 Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.

Lucretia. She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence
 She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance ;
 And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
 "Cenci must die ! Let him confess himself !

Even now the accusing angel waits to hear
If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
Harden his dying heart."

Cenci.

Why—such things are :

No doubt divine revealings may be made.
'Tis plain I have been favoured from above,
For, when I cursed my sons, they died.—Ay—so—
As to the right or wrong, that's talk !—Repentance—
Repentance is an easy moment's work,
And more depends on God than me. Well—well—
I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul. [*A pause; LUCRETIA
approaches anxiously, and then shrinks back as he speaks.*

One, two ;

Ay—Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled : and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse hell than that beyond the grave ;
Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming ; to Bernardo,
He is so innocent, I will bequeath
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna
I will pile-up my silver and my gold ;
My costly robes, paintings, and tapestries ;
My parchments, and all records of my wealth ;
And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name,—
Which shall be an inheritance to strip
Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
Into the hands of him who wielded it ;
Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
He will not ask it of me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound,—
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure. [*Going.*

Lucretia (stops him). Oh stay ! It was a feint :
She had no vision, and she heard no voice.
I said it but to awe thee.

Cenci.

That is well.

Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
 Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie !
 For Beatrice, worse terrors are in store
 To bend her to my will.

Lucretia.

Oh to what will ?

What cruel sufferings, more than she has known,
 Canst thou inflict ?

Cenci.

Andrea ! go call my daughter ;

And, if she comes not, tell her that I come.—
 What sufferings ? I will drag her, step by step,
 Through infamies unheard-of among men ;
 She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
 Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
 One among which shall be—what ? Canst thou guess ?
 She shall become (for what she most abhors
 Shall have a fascination to entrap
 Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
 All she appears to others ; and, when dead,
 As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
 A rebel to her father and her God,
 Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds ;
 Her name shall be the terror of the earth ;
 Her spirit shall approach the throne of God
 Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
 Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

*Enter ANDREA.**Andrea.* The Lady Beatrice—*Cenci.*

Speak, pale slave ! What

Said she ?

Andrea. My lord, 'twas what she looked. She said :
 "Go tell my father that I see the gulf
 Of hell between us two, which *he* may pass ;
 I will not."
[*Exit ANDREA.*

Cenci. Go thou quick, Lucretia,—

Tell her to come ; yet let her understand
 Her coming is consent : and say moreover
 That, if she come not, I will curse her. [*Exit LUCRETIA.*
Ha !

With what but with a father's curse doth God
 Panic-strike armèd Victory, and make pale
 Cities in their prosperity ? The world's Father

Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,
 Be he who asks even what men call me.
 Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
 Awe her before I speak? for I on them
 Did implicate quick ruin, and it came. [*Enter LUCRETIA.*
 Well, what? Speak, wretch!

Lucretia. She said, "I cannot come;
 Go tell my father that I see a torrent
 Of his own blood raging between us."

Cenci (kneeling). God,
 Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh
 Which thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
 This particle of my divided being;
 Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
 Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil
 Which sprung from me as from a hell,—was meant
 To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
 Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
 If, nursed by thy selectest dew of love,
 Such virtues blossom in her as should make
 The peace of life; I pray thee for my sake,
 As thou the common God and Father art
 Of her and me and all, reverse that doom!
 Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
 Poison, until she be encrusted round
 With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head
 The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
 Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
 Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
 To loathed lameness! All-beholding sun,
 Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
 With thine own blinding beams!

Lucretia. Peace! peace!
 For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words!
 When high God grants, he punishes such prayers.

Cenci (leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards heaven). He does his will, I mine! This in addition:
 That, if she have a child——

Lucretia. Horrible thought!
Cenci. That, if she ever have a child,—and thou,
 Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God
 That thou be fruitful in her, and increase

And multiply, fulfilling his command
 And my deep imprecation,—may it be
 A hideous likeness of herself ! that, as
 From a distorting mirror, she may see
 Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
 Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.
 And that the child may from its infancy
 Grow day by day more wicked and deformed,
 Turning her mother's-love to misery :
 And that both she and it may live, until
 It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
 Or what may else be more unnatural—
 So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
 Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave !
 Shall I revoke this curse ? Go, bid her come
 Before my words are chronicled in heaven. [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
 I do not feel as if I were a man,
 But like a fiend appointed to chastise
 The offences of some unremembered world.
 My blood is running up and down my veins :
 A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle ;
 I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe ;
 My heart is beating with an expectation
 Of horrid joy. [*Enter* LUCRETIA.

What ? Speak !

Lucretia. She bids thee curse ;
 And, if thy curses, as they cannot do,
 Could kill her soul—

Cenci. She would not come. 'Tis well.
 I can do both : first take what I demand,
 And then extort concession. To thy chamber !
 Fly ere I spurn thee : and beware this night
 That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer
 To come between the tiger and his prey. [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
 I must be late ; mine eyes grow weary dim
 With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.
 Conscience ! O thou most insolent of lies !
 They say that sleep, that healing dew of heaven,
 Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain
 Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go,
 First to belie thee with an hour of rest,
 Which will be deep and calm, I feel ; and then —

O multitudinous hell, the fiends will shake
 Thine arches with the laughter of their joy !
 There shall be lamentation heard in heaven
 As o'er an angel fallen ; and upon earth
 All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things
 Shall with a spirit of unnatural life
 Stir and be quickened—even as I am now !

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Before the Castle of Petrella.*

Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA above on the ramparts.

Beatrice. They come not yet.

Lucretia. 'Tis scarce midnight.

Beatrice. How slow
 Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,
 Lags leaden-footed Time !

Lucretia. The minutes pass—
 If he should wake before the deed is done ?

Beatrice. Oh, mother, he must never wake again !
 What thou hast said persuades me that our act
 Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell
 Out of a human form.

Lucretia. 'Tis true he spoke
 Of death and judgment with strange confidence
 For one so wicked ; as a man believing
 In God, yet recking not of good or ill.
 And yet to die without confession !—

Beatrice. Oh
 Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,
 And will not add our dread necessity
 To the amount of his offences.

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO, below.

Lucretia. See,
 They come.

Beatrice. All mortal things must hasten thus
 To their dark end. Let us go down.

[*Exeunt LUCRETIA and BEATRICE from above.*

Olimpio. How feel you to this work ?

Marzio. As one who thinks
 A thousand crowns excellent market-price
 For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.

Olimpio. It is the white reflection of your own
Which you call pale.

Marzio. Is that their natural hue?

Olimpio. Or 'tis my hate, and the deferred desire
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.

Marzio. You are inclined then to this business?

Olimpio. Ay ;

If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,
I could not be more willing.

Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA below.

Noble ladies !

Beatrice. Are ye resolved?

Olimpio. Is he asleep?

Marzio. Is all

Quiet?

Lucretia. I mixed an opiate with his drink :
He sleeps so soundly—

Beatrice. That his death will be
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,
A dark continuance of the hell within him,
Which God extinguish ! But ye are resolved ?
Ye know it is a high and holy deed ?

Olimpio. We are resolved.

Marzio. As to the how this act
Be warranted, it rests with you.

Beatrice. Well, follow.

Olimpio. Hush ! hark ! what noise is that ?

Marzio. Ha ! some one comes !

Beatrice. Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to rest
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate,
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,
That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow :
And be your steps like mine, light, quick, and bold.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in the Castle.*

Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA.

Lucretia. They are about it now.

Beatrice. Nay, it is done.

Lucretia. I have not heard him groan.

Beatrice. He will not groan.

Lucretia. What sound is that?

Beatrice. List ! 'tis the tread of feet
About his bed.

Lucretia. My God !
If he be now a cold stiff corpse—

Beatrice. Oh fear not
What may be done, but what is left undone :
The act seals all.

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO.

Is it accomplished ?

Marzio. What ?

Olimpio. Did you not call ?

Beatrice. When ?

Olimpio. Now.

Beatrice. I ask if all is over.

Olimpio. We dare not kill an old and sleeping man.
His thin grey hair, his stern and reverent brow,
His veined hands crossed on his heaving breast,
And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.

Marzio. But I was bolder ; for I chid Olimpio,
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave,
And leave *me* the reward. And now my knife
Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, " God ! hear, oh hear,
A father's curse ! What, art thou not our father ? "
And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him.

Beatrice. Miserable slaves !
Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
Found ye the boldness to return to me
With such a deed undone ? Base palterers !
Cowards and traitors ! Why, the very conscience
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
Is an equivocation : it sleeps over
A thousand daily acts disgracing men ;
And when a deed where mercy insults Heaven—
Why do I talk ?

[*Snatching a dagger from one of them, and raising it.*

Hadst thou a tongue to say

"She murdered her own father," I must do it!—
But never dream *ye* shall outlive him long!

Olimpio. Stop, for God's sake!

Marzio. I will go back and kill him.

Olimpio. Give me the weapon; we must do thy will.

Beatrice. Take it! Depart! Return!

[*Exeunt OLIMPIO and MARZIO.*

How pale thou art!

We do but that which 'twere a deadly crime
To leave undone.

Lucretia. Would it were done!

Beatrice. Even whilst

That doubt is passing through your mind, the world
Is conscious of a change. Darkness and hell
Have swallowed up the vapour they sent forth
To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath
Comes, methinks, lighter, and the jellied blood
Runs freely through my veins. Hark!

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO.

He is—

Olimpio. Dead!

Marzio. We strangled him, that there might be no blood;
And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden
Under the balcony; 'twill seem it fell.

Beatrice (*giving them a bag of coin*). Here, take this gold,
and hasten to your homes.

And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed
By that which made *me* tremble, wear thou this!

[*Clothes him in a rich mantle.*

It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state: so may they envy thine!
Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God
To a just use. Live long and thrive! And mark,
If thou hast crimes, repent: this deed is none.

[*A horn is sounded.*

Lucretia. Hark, 'tis the castle-horn! My God! it sounds
Like the last trump!

Beatrice. Some tedious guest is coming.

Lucretia. The drawbridge is let down; there is a tramp
Of horses in the court! Fly, hide yourselves!

[*Exeunt OLIMPIO and MARZIO.*

Beatrice. Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest.
 I scarcely need to counterfeit it now ;
 The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
 Seems strangely undisturbed : I could even sleep
 Fearless and calm. All ill is surely past. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Another Apartment in the Castle.*

*Enter on one side the Legate SAVELLA, introduced by a Servant,
 and on the other LUCRETIA and BERNARDO.*

Savella. Lady, my duty to his Holiness
 Be my excuse that thus unseasonably
 I break upon your rest. I must speak with
 Count Cenci ; doth he sleep ?

Lucretia (in a hurried and confused manner). I think he sleeps.
 Yet wake him not, I pray ; spare me awhile.
 He is a wicked and a wrathful man ;
 Should he be roused out of his sleep tonight,
 Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,
 It were not well ; indeed it were not well.
 Wait till daybreak.— (*Aside.*) Oh I am deadly sick

Savella. I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count
 Must answer charges of the gravest import,
 And suddenly ; such my commission is.

Lucretia (with increased agitation). I dare not rouse him,
 I know none who dare ;
 'Twere perilous ;—you might as safely waken
 A serpent, or a corpse in which some fiend
 Were laid to sleep.

Savella. Lady, my moments here
 Are counted. I must rouse him from his sleep,
 Since none else dare.

Lucretia (aside). Oh terror ! Oh despair !
 (*To BERNARDO.*) Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Legate to
 Your father's chamber. [*Exeunt SAVELLA and BERNARDO.*

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice. 'Tis a messenger
 Come to arrest the culprit who now stands
 Before the throne of unappealable God.
 Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,
 Acquit our deed.

Lucretia. Oh agony of fear !
 Would that he yet might live ! Even now I heard
 The legate's followers whisper as they passed
 They had a warrant for his instant death.
 All was prepared, by unforbidden means,
 Which we must pay so dearly, having done.
 Even now they search the tower, and find the body !
 Now they suspect the truth ; now they consult,
 Before they come to tax us with the fact !
 Oh horrible, 'tis all discovered !

Beatrice. Mother,
 What is done wisely is done well. Be bold
 As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child
 To fear that others know what thou hast done,
 Even from thine own strong consciousness : and thus
 Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
 All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,
 And fear no other witness but thy fear.
 For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
 Should rise in accusation, we can blind
 Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
 Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
 As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
 And what may follow now regards not me.
 I am as universal as the light ;
 Free as the earth-surrounding air ; as firm
 As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,
 Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock,
 But shakes it not. [*A cry within and tumult.*]

Voices. Murder ! Murder ! Murder !

Enter BERNARDO and SAVELLA.

Savella (to his followers). Go search the castle round ; sound
 the alarm ;

Look to the gates, that none escape !

Beatrice. What now ?

Bernardo. I know not what to say—My father's dead.

Beatrice. How, dead ? he only sleeps ; you mistake, brother.
 His sleep is very calm, very like death ;
 'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
 He is not dead ?

Bernardo. Dead, murdered !

Lucretia (with extreme agitation). Oh no, no !

He is not murdered, though he may be dead ;
I have alone the keys of those apartments.

Savella. Ha ! Is it so ?

Beatrice. My lord, I pray excuse us ;
We will retire ; my mother is not well ;
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.]

Savella. Can you suspect who may have murdered him ?

Bernardo. I know not what to think.

Savella. Can you name any
Who had an interest in his death ?

Bernardo. Alas !

I can name none who had not, and those most
Who most lament that such a deed is done ;
My mother, and my sister, and myself.

Savella. 'Tis strange ! There were clear marks of violence.
I found the old man's body in the moonlight,
Hanging beneath the window of his chamber
Among the branches of a pine : he could not
Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped
And effortless ; 'tis true there was no blood.—
Favour me, sir—it much imports your house
That all should be made clear—to tell the ladies
That I request their presence.

[*Exit* BERNARDO.]

Enter Guards, bringing in MARZIO.

Guard. We have one.

Officer. My lord, we found this ruffian and another
Lurking among the rocks ; there is no doubt
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci.
Each had a bag of coin. This fellow wore
A gold-inwoven robe, which, shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon,
Betrayed them to our notice. The other fell
Desperately fighting.

Savella. What does he confess ?

Officer. He keeps firm silence ; but these lines found on him
May speak.

Savella. Their language is at least sincere. [*Reads.*]

“TO THE LADY BEATRICE.

“That the atonement of what my nature sickens to conjecture

may soon arrive, I send thee, at thy brother's desire, those who will speak and do more than I dare write.

"Thy devoted servant,
"ORSINO."

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and BERNARDO.

Know'st thou this writing, lady?

Beatrice. No.

Savella. Nor thou?

Lucretia (*her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation*).

Where was it found? What is it? It should be Orsino's hand. It speaks of that strange horror Which never yet found utterance, but which made Between that hapless child and her dead father A gulf of obscure hatred.

Savella. Is it so?

Is it true, lady, that thy father did Such outrages as to awaken in thee Unfilial hate?

Beatrice. Not hate, 'twas more than hate: This is most true, yet wherefore question me?

Savella. There is a deed demanding question done; Thou hast a secret which will answer not.

Beatrice. What say'st? My lord, your words are bold and rash.

Savella. I do arrest all present in the name Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.

Lucretia. Oh not to Rome! Indeed we are not guilty.

Beatrice. Guilty! Who dares talk of guilt? My lord, I am more innocent of parricide Than is a child born fatherless. Dear mother, Your gentleness and patience are no shield For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie, Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws— Rather, will ye who are their ministers— Bar all access to retribution first,— And then, when Heaven doth interpose to do What ye neglect, arming familiar things To the redress of an unwonted crime, Make ye the victims who demanded it Culprits? 'Tis ye are culprits! That poor wretch Who stands so pale and trembling and amazed,

If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
 A sword in the right hand of justest God.
 Wherefore should I have wielded it? unless
 The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name
 God therefore scruples to avenge.

Savella. You own

That you desired his death?

Beatrice. It would have been

A crime no less than his if for one moment
 That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
 'Tis true I did believe and hope and pray,
 Ay, I even knew—for God is wise and just—
 That some strange sudden death hung over him.
 'Tis true that this did happen, and most true
 There was no other rest for me on earth,
 No other hope in heaven ;—now what of this? [are both.

Savella. Strange thoughts beget strange deeds ; and here
 I judge thee not.

Beatrice. And yet, if you arrest me,
 You are the judge and executioner
 Of that which is the life of life : the breath
 Of accusation kills an innocent name,
 And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
 Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false
 That I am guilty of foul parricide ;
 Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
 That other hands have sent my father's soul
 To ask the mercy he denied to me.
 Now leave us free : stain not a noble house
 With vague surmises of rejected crime ;
 Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
 No heavier sum ; let them have been enough.
 Leave us the wreck we have.

Savella. I dare not, lady.
 I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome :
 There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.

Lucretia. Oh not to Rome ! Oh take us not to Rome !

Beatrice. Why not to Rome, dear mother ? There, as here,
 Our innocence is as an armèd heel
 To trample accusation. God is there
 As here, and with his shadow ever clothes
 The innocent, the injured, and the weak ;

And such are we. Cheer up, dear lady ! lean
On me ; collect your wandering thoughts. My lord,
As soon as you have taken some refreshment,
And had all such examinations made
Upon the spot as may be necessary
To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother, will you come ?

Lucretia. Ha ! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest
Self-accusation from our agony !
Will Giacomo be there ? Orsino ? Marzio ?
All present ; all confronted ; all demanding,
Each from the other's countenance, the thing
Which is in every heart ! Oh misery !

[She faints, and is borne out.]

Savella. She faints ; an ill appearance this.

Beatrice. My lord,
She knows not yet the uses of the world.
She fears that Power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not : a snake whose look transmutes
All things to guilt, which is its nutriment.
She cannot know how well the supine slaves
Of blind authority read the truth of things
When written on a brow of guilelessness ;
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence
Stand at the judgment-seat of mortal man,
A judge and an accuser of the wrong
Which drags it there.—Prepare yourself, my lord ;
Our suite will join yours in the court below. *[Exeunt.]*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in ORSINO'S Palace.**Enter ORSINO and GIACOMO.*

Giacomo. Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end?
Oh that the vain remorse which must chastise
Crimes done had but as loud a voice to warn
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge!
Oh that the hour when present had cast off
The mantle of its mystery, and shown
The ghastly form with which it now returns,
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds
Of conscience to their prey! Alas, alas!
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,
To kill an old and hoary-headed father!

Orsino. It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

Giacomo. To violate the sacred doors of sleep;
To cheat kind Nature of the placid death
Which she prepares for overwearied age;
To drag from heaven an unrepentant soul,
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes—

Orsino. You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.

Giacomo. Oh had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance
The mirror of my darkest thoughts; hadst thou
Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until
It grew familiar to desire—

Orsino. 'Tis thus
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts
Upon the abettors of their own resolve,
Or anything but their weak guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence; confess, 'tis Fear, disguised
From its own shame, that takes the mantle now
Of thin Remorse. What if we yet were safe?

Giacomo. How can that be? Already Beatrice,

Lucretia, and the murderer, are in prison.
I doubt not, officers are, whilst we speak,
Sent to arrest us.

Orsino. I have all prepared
For instant flight. We can escape even now,
So we take fleet Occasion by the hair.

Giacomo. Rather expire in tortures, as I may !
What ! will you cast by self-accusing flight
Assured conviction upon Beatrice ?
She who alone, in this unnatural work,
Stands like God's angel ministered-upon
By fiends ; avenging such a nameless wrong
As turns black parricide to piety ;
Whilst we for basest ends . . . I fear, Orsino,
While I consider all your words and looks,
Comparing them with your proposal now,
That you must be a villain. For what end
Could you engage in such a perilous crime,
Training me on with hints and signs and smiles
Even to this gulf ? Thou art no liar ? No,
Thou art a lie ! Traitor and murderer !
Coward and slave ! But no—defend thyself ; *[Drawing.*
Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue
Disdains to brand thee with !

Orsino. Put up your weapon.
Is it the desperation of your fear
Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend
Now ruined for your sake ? If honest anger
Have moved you, know that what I just proposed
Was but to try you. As for me, I think
Thankless affection led me to this point ;
From which, if my firm temper could repent,
I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak,
The ministers of justice wait below :
They grant me these brief moments. Now, if you
Have any word of melancholy comfort
To speak to your pale wife, 'twere best to pass
Out at the postern, and avoid them so.

Giacomo. O generous friend ! How canst thou pardon me ?
Would that my life could purchase thine !

Orsino. That wish
Now comes a day too late. Haste ; fare thee well !

Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor? [*Exit GIACOMO*
 I'm sorry for it ; but the guards are waiting
 At his own gate, and such was my contrivance
 That I might rid me both of him and them.
 I thought to act a solemn comedy
 Upon the painted scene of this new world,
 And to attain my own peculiar ends
 By some such plot of mingled good and ill
 As others weave ; but there arose a Power
 Which grasped and snapped the threads of my device,
 And turned it to a net of ruin—Ha ! [*A shout is heard.*
 Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad ?
 But I will pass, wrapped in a vile disguise,
 Rags on my back, and a false innocence
 Upon my face, through the misdeeming crowd
 Which judges by what seems. 'Tis easy then,
 For a new name and for a country new,
 And a new life fashioned on old desires,
 To change the honours of abandoned Rome :
 And these must be the masks of that within,
 Which must remain unaltered.—Oh I fear
 That what is past will never let me rest !
 Why, when none else is conscious, but myself,
 Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt
 Trouble me? have I not the power to fly
 My own reproaches? shall I be the slave
 Of—what? A word ! which those of this false world
 Employ against each other, not themselves ;
 As men wear daggers not for self-offence.
 But, if I am mistaken, where shall I
 Find the disguise to hide me from myself,
 As now I skulk from every other eye? [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Hall of Justice.*

CAMILLO, JUDGES, &c., are discovered seated ; MARZIO is led in.

First Judge. Accused, do you persist in your denial?

I ask you, Are you innocent or guilty?

I demand, Who were the participators

In your offence? Speak truth, and the whole truth.

Marzio. My God ! I did not kill him · I know nothing ;

Olimpio sold the robe to me from which
You would infer my guilt.

Second Judge. Away with him !

First Judge. Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss,
Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner
That you would bandy lover's talk with it,
Till it wind out your life and soul? Away !

Marzio. Spare me ! oh spare ! I will confess.

First Judge. Then speak.

Marzio. I strangled him in his sleep.

First Judge. Who urged you to it ?

Marzio. His own son Giacomo, and the young prelate
Orsino, sent me to Petrella ; there
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
And my companion forthwith murdered him.
Now let me die.

First Judge. This sounds as bad as truth.¹
Guards there, lead forth the prisoners.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, guarded.

Look upon

This man. When did you see him last ?

Beatrice. We never

Saw him.

Marzio. You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.

Beatrice. I know thee ! How ! where ? when ?

Marzio. You know 'twas I

Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
To kill your father. When the thing was done,
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold,
And bade me thrive : how I have thriven you see.
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.

[*BEATRICE advances towards him ; he covers his face, and
shrinks back.*]

Oh dart

The terrible resentment of those eyes
On the dead earth ! Turn them away from me—
They wound ! 'Twas torture forced the truth. My lords,
Having said this, let me be led to death.

Beatrice. Poor wretch, I pity thee : yet stay awhile.

Camillo. Guards, lead him not away.

Beatrice.

Cardinal Camillo,

You have a good repute for gentleness
 And wisdom : can it be that you sit here
 To countenance a wicked farce like this?
 When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged
 From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart,
 And bade to answer, not as he believes,
 But as those may suspect or do desire
 Whose questions thence suggest their own reply,—
 And that in peril of such hideous torments
 As merciful God spares even the damned ! Speak now
 The thing you surely know, which is that you,
 If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
 And you were told, “ Confess that you did poison
 Your little nephew, that fair blue-eyed child
 Who was the lodestar of your life ; ”—and though
 All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
 That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
 And all the things hoped for or done therein,
 Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief ;—
 Yet you would say “ I confess anything,”
 And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
 The refuge of dishonourable death.
 I pray you, Cardinal, that you assert
 My innocence.

Camillo (much moved). What shall we think, my lords?
 Shame on these tears ! I thought the heart was frozen
 Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul
 That she is guiltless.

Fudge.

Yet she must be tortured.

Camillo. I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew
 (If he now lived, he would be just her age ;
 His hair, too, was her colour, and his eyes
 Like hers in shape, but blue and not so deep)
 As that most perfect image of God’s love
 That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.
 She is as pure as speechless infancy !

Fudge. Well, be her purity on your head, my lord,
 If you forbid the rack. His Holiness
 Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime
 By the severest forms of law ; nay, even
 To stretch a point against the criminals.

The prisoners stand accused of parricide,
Upon such evidence as justifies
Torture.

Beatrice. What evidence? This man's?

Judge.

Even so.

Beatrice (to MARZIO). Come near. And who art thou thus
Out of the multitude of living men [chosen forth
To kill the innocent?

Marzio. I am Marzio,
Thy father's vassal.

Beatrice. Fix thine eyes on mine ;
Answer to what I ask.

[*Turning to the Judges.*

I prithee mark
His countenance : unlike bold Calumny
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth.

(*To MARZIO.*) What ! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father?

Marzio. Oh
Spare me ! My brain swims round—I cannot speak—
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.
Take me away ! Let her not look on me !
I am a guilty miserable wretch !
I have said all I know ; now let me die !

Beatrice. My lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern as to have planned the crime alleged
(Which your suspicions dictate to this slave,
And the rack makes him utter), do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed, this man, this bloody knife
With my own name engraven on the hilt,
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,
For my own death ? that, with such horrible need
For deepest silence, I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written
On a thief's memory ? What is his poor life ?
What are a thousand lives ? A parricide
Had trampled them like dust ; and see, he lives !

[*Turning to MARZIO.*

And thou—

Marzio. Oh spare me ! Speak to me no more !
That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,
Wound worse than torture.

(*To the Judges*). I have told it all ;
For pity's sake lead me away to death !

Camillo. Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice.
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.

Beatrice. O thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me ;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay.
What evil have we done thee ? I, alas,
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years ;
And so my lot was ordered that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops each poisoning youth's sweet hope ; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul,
And my untainted fame, and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart.
But the wound was not mortal ; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
To our great Father, who in pity and love
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off ;
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation !
And art thou the accuser ? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth :
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say : " My Maker
I have done this, and more ; for there was one
Who was most pure and innocent on earth ;
And because she endured what never any,
Guilty or innocent, endured before,
Because her wrongs could not be told nor thought,
Because thy hand at length did rescue her,
I with my words killed her and all her kin."
Think, I adjure thee, what it is to slay¹
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house and stainless fame !
Think what it is to strangle infant Pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,—

Till it become a crime to suffer. Think
 What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood
 All that which shows like innocence, and is—
 Hear me, great God!—I swear, most innocent,
 So that the world lose all discrimination
 Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,
 And that which now compels thee to reply
 To what I ask: Am I or am I not
 A parricide?

Marzio. Thou art not!

Judge. What is this?

Marzio. I here declare those whom I did accuse
 Are innocent. 'Tis I alone am guilty.

Judge. Drag him away to torments; let them be
 Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds
 Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
 Till he confess.

Marzio. Torture me as ye will:
 A keener pang has wrung a higher truth
 From my last breath. She is most innocent.
 Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me!
 I will not give you that fine piece of nature
 To rend and ruin. [Exit MARZIO, guarded.]

Camillo. What say ye now, my lords?

Judge. Let tortures strain the truth till it be white
 As snow thrice sifted by the frozen wind.

Camillo. Yet stained with blood.

Judge (to BEATRICE). Know you this paper, lady?

Beatrice. Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here
 As my accuser? Ha! wilt thou be he,
 Who art my judge? Accuser, witness, judge,
 What, all in one? Here is Orsino's name;
 Where is Orsino? Let his eye meet mine.
 What means this scrawl? Alas! ye know not what;
 And therefore, on the chance that it may be
 Some evil, will ye kill us?

Enter an Officer.

Officer. Marzio's dead.

Judge. What did he say?

Officer. Nothing. As soon as we
 Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,

As one who baffles a deep adversary ;
And, holding his breath, died.

Judge. There remains nothing
But to apply the question to those prisoners
Who yet remain stubborn.

Camillo. I overrule
Further proceedings, and in the behalf
Of these most innocent and noble persons
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.

Judge. Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells.
And be the engines ready : for this night—
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
Pious, and just, as once—I'll wring the truth
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.—*The Cell of a Prison.* BEATRICE is discovered
asleep on a couch.

Enter BERNARDO.

Bernardo. How gently slumber rests upon her face,
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent,
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged !
After such torments as she bore last night,
How light and soft her breathing comes ! Ay me !
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest
From this sweet folded flower, thus—Wake ! awake !
What, sister, canst thou sleep ?

Beatrice (awaking). I was just dreaming
That we were all in paradise. Thou knowest
This cell seems like a kind of paradise
After our father's presence.

Bernardo. Dear dear sister,
Would that thy dream were not a dream ! O God !
How shall I tell ?

Beatrice. What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother ?

Bernardo. Look not so calm and happy, or, even whilst
I stand considering what I have to say,
My heart will break !

Beatrice. See now, thou mak'st me weep.

How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say. [more]

Bernardo. They have confessed; they could endure no
The tortures—

Beatrice. Ha! What was there to confess?
They must have told some weak and wicked lie
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said
That they were guilty? O white Innocence,
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide
Thine awful and serenest countenance
From those who know thee not!

Enter JUDGE, with LUCRETIA and GIACOMO, guarded.

Ignoble hearts!

For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendour laid in dust?
And that eternal honour which should live
Sunlike above the reek of mortal fame
Changed to a mockery and a by-word? What!
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged
At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep
The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,
Who, that they may make our calamity
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave
The churches and the theatres as void
As their own hearts? Shall the light multitude
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,
Sad funeral-flowers to deck a living corpse,
Upon us as we pass, to pass away,
And leave—what memory of our having been?
Infamy, blood, terror, despair! O thou
Who wert a mother to the parentless,
Kill not thy child! Let not her wrongs kill thee!
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,
And let us each be silent as a corpse;
It soon will be as soft as any grave.
'Tis but the falsehood it can wring from fear
Makes the rack cruel.

Giacomo. They will tear the truth
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains:
For pity's sake, say thou art guilty now.

Lucretia. Oh speak the truth! Let us all quickly die:

And after death God is our judge, not they ;
He will have mercy on us.

Bernardo. If indeed
It can be true, say so, dear sister mine ;
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,
And all be well.

Judge. Confess, or I will warp
Your limbs with such keen tortures—

Beatrice. Tortures! Turn
The rack henceforth into a spinning-wheel !
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapped the blood his master shed—not me !
My pangs are of the mind and of the heart
And of the soul : ay, of the inmost soul,
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,
My kindred false to their deserted selves ;
And with considering all the wretched life
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end ;
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth
To me or mine ; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these ; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and the oppressed—Such pangs compel
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me ?

Judge. Art thou not guilty of thy father's death ?

Beatrice. Or wilt thou rather tax high-judging God
That he permitted such an act as that
Which I have suffered, and which he beheld ;
Made it unutterable, and took from it
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,
But that which thou hast called my father's death ?
Which is or is not what men call a crime,
Which either I have done or have not done ;
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be—
And so an end of all. Now do your will ;
No other pains shall force another word.

Judge. She is convicted, but has not confessed.
Be it enough. Until their final sentence,
Let none have converse with them. You, young lord,
Linger not here.

Beatrice. Oh tear him not away !

Judge. Guards ! do your duty.
Bernardo (embracing BEATRICE). Oh would ye divide
 Body from soul?

Officer. That is the headsman's business.

[*Exeunt all but LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO.*]

Giacomo. Have I confessed? Is it all over now?
 No hope? no refuge? O weak wicked tongue
 Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been
 Cut out and thrown to dogs first! To have killed
 My father first, and then betrayed my sister—
 Ay, thee! the one thing innocent and pure
 In this black guilty world—to that which I
 So well deserve! My wife, my little ones,
 Destitute, helpless! and I—Father! God!
 Canst thou forgive even the unforgiving,
 When their full hearts break thus, thus?—

[*Covers his face and weeps.*]

Lucretia.

Oh my child

To what a dreadful end are we all come!
 Why did I yield? why did I not sustain
 Those torments? Oh that I were all dissolved
 Into these fast and unavailing tears,
 Which flow and feel not!

Beatrice.

What 'twas weak to do

'Tis weaker to lament, once being done.
 Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made
 Our speedy act the angel of his wrath,
 Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.
 Let us not think that we shall die for this.
 Brother, sit near me; give me your firm hand,
 You had a manly heart. Bear up! bear up!
 O dearest lady, put your gentle head
 Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile:
 Your eyes look pale, hollow, and overworn,
 With heaviness of watching and slow grief.
 Come, I will sing you some low sleepy tune,
 Not cheerful nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
 Some outworn and unused monotony,
 Such as our country-gossips sing and spin,
 Till they almost forget they live. Lie down!
 So; that will do. Have I forgot the words?
 Faith! they are sadder than I thought they were.

"False friend, wilt thou smile or weep
 When my life is laid asleep?
 Little cares for a smile or a tear
 The clay-cold corpse upon the bier.
 Farewell! Heigh ho!
 What is this whispers low?
 There is a snake in thy smile, my dear,
 And bitter poison within thy tear.

"Sweet sleep! were death like to thee,
 Or if thou couldst mortal be,
 I would close these eyes of pain,
 When to wake? Never again.
 O world! farewell!
 Listen to the passing bell!
 It says, thou and I must part,
 With a light and a heavy heart."

[*The scene closes.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Hall of the Prison.*

Enter CAMILLO and BERNARDO.

Camillo. The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.
 He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
 Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
 From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,
 A rite, a law, a custom; not a man.
 He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
 Of his machinery, on the advocates
 Presenting the defences, which he tore
 And threw behind, muttering with hoarse harsh voice:
 "Which among ye defended their old father
 Killed in his sleep?" Then to another: "Thou
 Dost this in virtue of thy place; 'tis well."
 He turned to me then looking deprecation,
 And said these three words coldly, "They must die."

Bernardo. And yet you left him not?

Camillo. I urged him still
 Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
 Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
 And he replied: "Paolo Santa Croce
 Murdered his mother yester evening,
 And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife
 That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young

Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
 Authority and power and hoary hair
 Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,—
 You come to ask their pardon. *Stay a moment ;
 Here is their sentence ; never see me more,
 Till to the letter it be all fulfilled.”

Bernardo. O God, not so ! I did believe indeed
 That all you said was but sad preparation
 For happy news. Oh there are words and looks
 To bend the sternest purpose ! Once I knew them ;
 Now I forget them at my dearest need.
 What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
 His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears ?
 Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
 With my perpetual cries, until in rage
 He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
 Upon my prostrate head so that my blood
 May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
 And remorse waken mercy ? I will do it !
 Oh wait till I return ! *[Rushes out.*

Camillo. Alas, poor boy !
 A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
 To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, *guarded.*

Beatrice. I hardly dare to fear
 That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

Camillo. May God in heaven be less inexorable
 To the Pope's prayers than he has been to mine !
 Here is the sentence and the warrant.

Beatrice (wildly). O
 My God ! Can it be possible I have
 To die so suddenly ? so young to go
 Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground ?
 To be nailed down into a narrow place ;
 To see no more sweet sunshine ; hear no more
 Blithe voice of living thing ; muse not again
 Upon familiar thoughts,—sad, yet thus lost
 How fearful ! To be nothing ! or to be—
 What ? Oh where am I ? Let me not go mad !
 Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts ! If there should be
 No God, no heaven, no earth, in the void world,
 The wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world !

If all things then should be . . . my father's spirit,
 His eye, his voice, his touch, surrounding me,
 The atmosphere and breath of my dead life !
 If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
 Even the form which tortured me on earth,
 Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles he should come,
 And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
 His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down !
 For was he not alone omnipotent
 On earth, and ever present ? Even though dead
 Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
 And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
 Scorn, pain, despair ? Who ever yet returned
 To teach the laws of Death's untrodden realm ?
 Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
 Oh whither, whither ?

Lucretia. Trust in God's sweet love,
 The tender promises of Christ : ere night
 Think we shall be in paradise.

Beatrice. . . . 'Tis past !
 Whatever comes, my heart shall sink no more.
 And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill.
 How tedious, false, and cold, seem all things ! I
 Have met with much injustice in this world ;
 No difference has been made by God or man,
 Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
 Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
 I am cut off from the only world I know,
 From light and life and love, in youth's sweet prime.
 You do well telling me to trust in God ;
 I hope I do trust in him : in whom else
 Can any trust ? And yet my heart is cold.

[*During the latter speeches* GIACOMO *has retired conversing*
with CAMILLO, who now goes out ; GIACOMO *advances.*

Giacomo. Know you not, mother—sister, know you not ?
 Bernardo even now is gone to implore.
 The Pope to grant our pardon.

Lucretia. Child, perhaps
 It will be granted ! We may all then live
 To make these woes a tale for distant years.
 Oh what a thought ! It gushes to my heart
 Like the warm blood.

Beatrice. Yet both will soon be cold.
 Oh trample out that thought ! Worse than despair,
 Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope :
 It is the only ill which can find place
 Upon the giddy, sharp, and narrow hour
 Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
 That it should spare the eldest flower of Spring :
 Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
 Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free—
 Now stench and blackness yawn like death : oh plead
 With famine or wind-walking pestilence,
 Blind lightning or the deaf sea ;—not with man !
 Cruel, cold, formal man ; righteous in words,
 In deeds a Cain ! No, mother, we must die :
 Since such is the reward of innocent lives,
 Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
 And, whilst our murderers live, and hard cold men,
 Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears
 To death as to life's sleep, 'twere just the grave
 Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
 And wind me in thine all-embracing arms !
 Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
 And rock me to the sleep from which none wake !
 Live, ye who live, subject to one another,
 As we were once, who now—

BERNARDO *rushes in.*

Bernardo. Oh horrible !
 That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer
 Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
 Should all be vain ! The ministers of death
 Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
 Blood on the face of one.—What if 'twere fancy ?
 Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
 Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
 As if 'twere only rain. O life ! O world !
 Cover me ! let me be no more ! To see
 That perfect mirror of pure innocence,
 Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
 Shivered to dust ! To see thee, Beatrice,
 Who mad'st all lovely thou didst look upon—
 Thee, light of life—dead, dark ! while I say “ Sister,”
 To hear I have no sister ! And thou, mother,

Whose love was as a bond to all our loves—
Dead—the sweet bond broken !

Enter CAMILLO and Guards.

They come ! Let me

Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted—white—cold. Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice ! Oh let me hear
You speak !

Beatrice. Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now :
And let mild pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child ;
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us ; and to the faith that I,
Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And, though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayst thou die as I do, fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell, farewell, farewell !

Bernardo. I cannot say farewell !

Camillo.

Oh Lady Beatrice !

Beatrice. Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal.—Here, mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind-up this hair
In any simple knot : ay, that does well.
And yours, I see, is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another ! now
We shall not do it any more. My lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.

NOTE ON "THE CENCI," BY MRS. SHELLEY.

THE sort of mistake that Shelley made as to the extent of his own genius and powers, which led him deviously at first, but lastly into the direct track that enabled him fully to develop them, is a curious instance of his modesty of feeling, and of the methods which the human mind uses at once to deceive itself, and yet, in its very delusion, to make its way out of error into the path which Nature has marked out as its right one. He often incited me to attempt the writing a tragedy : he conceived that I possessed some dramatic talent, and he was always most earnest and energetic in his exhortations that I should cultivate any talent I possessed, to the utmost. I entertained a truer estimate of my powers ; and above all (though at that time not exactly aware of the fact) I was far too young to have any chance of succeeding, even moderately, in a species of composition that requires a greater scope of experience in, and sympathy with, human passion than could then have fallen to my lot,—or than any perhaps, except Shelley, ever possessed, even at the age of twenty-six, at which he wrote *The Cenci*.

On the other hand, Shelley most erroneously conceived himself to be destitute of this talent. He believed that one of the first requisites was the capacity of forming and following-up a story or plot. He fancied himself to be defective in this portion of imagination : it was that which gave him least pleasure in the writings of others, though he laid great store by it as the proper framework to support the sublimest efforts of poetry. He asserted that he was too metaphysical and abstract, too fond of the theoretical and the ideal, to succeed as a tragedian. It perhaps is not strange that I shared this opinion with himself ; for he had hitherto shown no inclination for, nor given any specimen of his powers in framing and supporting the interest of a story, either in prose or verse. Once or twice, when he attempted such, he had speedily thrown it aside, as being even disagreeable to him as an occupation.

The subject he had suggested for a tragedy was Charles I. : and he had written to me : "Remember, remember Charles I. I have been already imagining how you would conduct some scenes. The second volume of *St. Leon* begins with this proud and true sentiment : 'There is nothing which the human mind can conceive which it may not execute.' Shakespeare was only a human being." These words were written in 1818, while we were in Lombardy, when he little thought how soon a work of his own would prove a proud comment on the passage he quoted. When in Rome, in 1819, a friend put into our hands the old manuscript account of the story of the Cenci. We visited the Colonna and Doria palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found ; and her beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story. Shelley's imagination became strongly excited, and he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy. More than ever I felt my incompetence ; but I entreated him to write it instead ; and he began, and proceeded swiftly, urged on by intense sympathy with the sufferings of the human beings whose passions, so long cold in the tomb, he revived, and gifted with poetic language. This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangement of the scenes together. I speedily saw the great mistake we had made, and triumphed in the discovery of the new talent brought to light from that mine of wealth (never, alas, through his untimely death, worked to its depths)—his richly gifted mind.

We suffered a severe affliction in Rome by the loss of our eldest child, who was of such beauty and promise as to cause him deservedly to be the idol of our hearts. We left the capital of the world, anxious for a time to escape a spot associated too intimately with his presence and loss.¹ Some friends of ours were residing in the neighbourhood of Leghorn, and we took a small

¹ Such feelings haunted him when, in *The Cenci*, he makes Beatrice speak to Cardinal Camillo of

"that fair blue-eyed child
Who was the lodestar of your life"—

house, Villa Valsovano, about half-way between the town and Monte Nero, where we remained during the summer. Our villa was situated in the midst of a *podere*; the peasants sang as they worked beneath our windows, during the heats of a very hot season, and in the evening the water-wheel creaked as the process of irrigation went on, and the fire-flies flashed from among the myrtle hedges: Nature was bright, sunshiny, and cheerful, or diversified by storms of a majestic terror, such as we had never before witnessed.

At the top of the house there was a sort of terrace. There is often such in Italy, generally roofed: this one was very small, yet not only roofed but glazed. This Shelley made his study; it looked out on a wide prospect of fertile country, and commanded a view of the near sea. The storms that sometimes varied our day showed themselves most picturesquely as they were driven across the ocean; sometimes the dark lurid clouds dipped towards the waves, and became water-spouts that churned up the waters beneath, as they were chased onward and scattered by the tempest. At other times the dazzling sunlight and heat made it almost intolerable to every other; but Shelley basked in both, and his health and spirits revived under their influence. In this airy cell he wrote the principal part of *The Cenci*. He was making a study of Calderon at the time, reading his best tragedies with an accomplished lady living near us, to whom his letter from Leghorn was addressed during the following year. He admired Calderon, both for his poetry and his dramatic genius; but it shows his judgment and originality that, though greatly struck by his first acquaintance with the Spanish poet, none of his peculiarities crept into the composition of *The Cenci*; and there is no trace of his new studies, except in that passage to which he himself alludes as suggested by one in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio*.

Shelley wished *The Cenci* to be acted. He was not a playgoer, being of such fastidious taste that he was easily disgusted by the bad filling-up of the inferior parts. While preparing for our departure from England, however, he saw Miss O'Neil several times. She was then in the zenith of her glory; and Shelley was deeply moved by her impersonation of several parts, and by the graceful sweetness, the intense pathos, and sublime vehemence of passion, she displayed. She was often in his thoughts as he wrote; and, when he had finished, he became anxious that his tragedy should be acted, and receive the advantage of having this accomplished actress to fill the part of the heroine. With this view he wrote the following letter to a friend in London:

"The object of the present letter is to ask a favour of you. I have written a tragedy on a story well known in Italy, and, in my conception, eminently dramatic. I have taken some pains to make my play fit for representation, and those who have already seen it judge favourably. It is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterize my other compositions; I have attended simply to the impartial development of such characters as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development. I send you a translation of the Italian MS. on which my play is founded; the chief circumstance of which I have touched very delicately; for my principal doubt as to whether it would succeed as an acting play hangs entirely on the question as to whether any such a thing as incest in this shape, however treated, would be admitted on the stage. I think, however, it will form no objection; considering, first, that the facts are matter of history, and, secondly, the peculiar delicacy with which I have treated it."

and say—

"All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all the things hoped for or done therein,
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief."

¹ In speaking of his mode of treating this main incident, Shelley said that it might be remarked that, in the course of the play, he had never mentioned expressly Cenci's worst crime. Every one knew what it must be, but it was never imaged in words—the nearest allusion to it being that portion of Cenci's curse beginning—

"That, if she have a child," &c.

"I am exceedingly interested in the question of whether this attempt of mine will succeed or not. I am strongly inclined to the affirmative at present; founding my hopes on this—that, as a composition, it is certainly not inferior to any of the modern plays that have been acted, with the exception of *Remorse*; that the interest of the plot is incredibly greater and more real; and that there is nothing beyond what the multitude are contented to believe that they can understand, either in imagery, opinion, or sentiment. I wish to preserve a complete incognito, and can trust to you that, whatever else you do, you will at least favour me on this point. Indeed, this is essential, deeply essential, to its success. After it had been acted, and successfully (could I hope for such a thing), I would own it if I pleased, and use the celebrity it might acquire to my own purposes.

"What I want you to do is to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden. The principal character, Beatrice, is precisely fitted for Miss O'Neil, and it might even seem to have been written for her (God forbid that I should see her play it—it would tear my nerves to pieces); and in all respects it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male character I confess I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean should play. That is impossible, and I must be contented with an inferior actor."

The play was accordingly sent to Mr. Harris. He pronounced the subject to be so objectionable that he could not even submit the part to Miss O'Neil for perusal, but expressed his desire that the author would write a tragedy on some other subject, which he would gladly accept. Shelley printed a small edition at Leghorn, to ensure its correctness; as he was much annoyed by the many mistakes that crept into his text when distance prevented him from correcting the press.

Universal approbation soon stamped *The Cenci* as the best tragedy of modern times. Writing concerning it, Shelley said: "I have been cautious to avoid the introducing faults of youthful composition; diffuseness, a profusion of inapplicable imagery, vagueness, generality, and, as Hamlet says, *words, words*." There is nothing that is not purely dramatic throughout; and the character of Beatrice, proceeding, from vehement struggle, to horror, to deadly resolution, and lastly to the elevated dignity of calm suffering, joined to passionate tenderness and pathos, is touched with hues so vivid and so beautiful that the poet seems to have read intimately the secrets of the noble heart imaged in the lovely countenance of the unfortunate girl. The Fifth Act is a masterpiece. It is the finest thing he ever wrote, and may claim proud comparison not only with any contemporary, but preceding, poet. The varying feelings of Beatrice are expressed with passionate, heart-reaching eloquence. Every character has a voice that echoes truth in its tones. It is curious, to one acquainted with the written story, to mark the success with which the poet has inwoven the real incidents of the tragedy into his scenes, and yet, through the power of poetry, has obliterated all that would otherwise have shown too harsh or too hideous in the picture. His success was a double triumph; and often after he was earnestly entreated to write again in a style that commanded popular favour, while it was not less instinct with truth and genius. But the bent of his mind went the other way; and, even when employed on subjects whose interest depended on character and incident, he would start off in another direction, and leave the delineations of human passion, which he could depict in so able a manner, for fantastic creations of his fancy, or the expression of those opinions and sentiments, with regard to human nature and its destiny, a desire to diffuse which was the master passion of his soul.

PETER BELL THE THIRD.

BY MICHING MALLECHO ESQ.

Is it a party in a parlour,
Crammed just as they on earth were crammed,
Some sipping punch—some sipping tea,
But, as you by their faces see,
All silent, and all—damned?

Peter Bell, by W. WORDSWORTH.

OPHELIA.—What means this, my lord?

HAMLET.—Marry, this is Miching Mallecho; it means mischief.

SHAKESPEARE.

DEDICATION.

TO THOMAS BROWN ESQ., THE YOUNGER, H.F.

DEAR TOM,—Allow me to request you to introduce Mr. Peter Bell to the respectable family of the Fudges. Although he may fall short of those very considerable personages in the more active properties which characterize the Rat and the Apostate, I suspect that even you, their historian, will confess that he surpasses them in the more peculiarly legitimate qualification of intolerable fullness.

You know Mr. Examiner Hunt; well—it was he who presented me to two of the Mr. Bells. My intimacy with the younger Mr. Bell naturally sprung from this introduction to his brothers. And, in presenting him to you, I have the satisfaction of being able to assure you that he is considerably the dullest of the three.

There is this particular advantage in an acquaintance with any one of the Peter Bells—that, if you know one Peter Bell, you know three Peter Bells: they are not one, but three; not three, but one. An awful mystery, which, after having caused torrents of blood, and having been hymned by groans enough to deafen the music of the spheres, is at length illustrated, to the satisfaction of all parties in the theological world, by the nature of Mr. Peter Bell.

Peter is a polyhedric Peter, or a Peter with many sides. He changes colours like a chameleon, and his coat like a snake. He is a Proteus of a Peter. He was at first sublime, pathetic, impressive, profound; then dull; then prosy and dull; and now dull—oh so very dull! it is an ultra-legitimate dullness.

You will perceive that it is not necessary to consider Hell and the Devil as supernatural machinery. The whole scene of my epic is in "this world, which is—" so Peter informed us before his conversion to *White Obi*—

"—the world of all of us, and where
We find our happiness, or not at all."

Let me observe that I have spent six or seven days in composing this sublime piece; the orb of my moonlight genius has made the fourth part of its revolution round the dull earth which you inhabit, driving you mad, while it has retained its calmness and its splendour, and I have been fitting this its last phase "to occupy a permanent station in the literature of my country."

Your works, indeed, dear Tom, sell better; but mine are far superior. The public is no judge; posterity sets all to rights.

Allow me to observe that so much has been written of Peter Bell that the present history can be considered only, like the *Iliad*, as a continuation of that series of cyclic poems which have already been candidates for bestowing immortality upon, at the same time that they receive it from, his character and

adventures. In this point of view, I have violated no rule of syntax in beginning my composition with a conjunction ; the full stop which closes the poem continued by me being, like the full stops at the end of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, a full stop of a very qualified import.

Hoping that the immortality which you have given to the Fudges you will receive from them ; and in the firm expectation that when London shall be an habitation of bitterns ; when St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey shall stand, shapeless and nameless ruins, in the midst of an unpeopled marsh ; when the piers of Waterloo Bridge shall become the nuclei of islets of reeds and osiers, and cast the jagged shadows of their broken arches on the solitary stream ; some transatlantic commentator will be weighing, in the scales of some new and now unimagined system of criticism, the respective merits of the Bells and the Fudges, and their historians,

I remain, dear Tom,

Yours sincerely,

MICHING MALLECHO.

December 1, 1819.

P.S.—Pray excuse the date of place ; so soon as the profits of the publication come in, I mean to hire lodgings in a more respectable street.

PROLOGUE.

PETER BELLS, one, two, and three,
O'er the wide world wandering be.—
First, the antenatal Peter,
Wrapped in weeds of the same metre,
The so long predestined raiment
Clothed in which to walk his way meant
The second Peter ; whose ambition
Is to link the proposition
As the mean of two extremes—
(This was learnt from Aldrich's themes)—
Shielding from the guilt of schism
The orthodox syllogism ;
The first Peter—he who was
Like the shadow in the glass
Of the second, yet unripe,
His substantial antitype.—
Then came Peter Bell the Second,
Who henceforward must be reckoned
The body of a double soul,
And that portion of the whole
Without which the rest would seem
Ends of a disjointed dream.—
And the Third is he who has
O'er the grave been forced to pass
To the other side, which is—
Go and try else—just like this.

Peter Bell the First was Peter
Smugger, milder, softer, neater,
Like the soul before it is
Born from that world into this.
The next Peter Bell was he
Predevote, like you and me,
To good or evil as may come ;
His was the severer doom,—
For he was an evil cotter,
And a polygamic Potter.
And the last is Peter Bell
Damned since our first parents fell,
Damned eternally to Hell—
Surely he deserves it well !

PART I.—DEATH.

I.

AND Peter Bell, when he had been
With fresh-imported hell-fire warmed,
Grew serious—from his dress and mien
'Twas very plainly to be seen
Peter was quite reformed.

II.

His eyes turned up, his mouth turned down ;
His accent caught a nasal twang ;
He oiled his hair ; there might be heard
The grace of God in every word
Which Peter said or sang.

III.

But Peter now grew old, and had
An ill no doctor could unravel ;
His torments almost drove him mad ;—
Some said it was a fever bad,
Some swore it was the gravel.

IV.

His holy friends then came about,
And with long preaching and persuasion
Convinced the patient that, without
The smallest shadow of a doubt,
He was predestined to damnation.

V.

They said : " Thy name is Peter *Bell*,
Thy skin is of a brimstone *hue* ;
Alive or dead—ay, sick or well—
The one God made to rhyme with *hell* ;
The other, I think, rhymes with *you*."

VI.

Then Peter set up such a yell !—
The nurse, who with some water-gruel
Was climbing up the stairs as well
As her old legs could climb them, fell,
And broke them both—the fall was cruel.

VII.

The parson from the casement leapt
Into the lake of Windermere :
And many an eel—though no adept
In God's right reason for it—kept
Gnawing his kidneys half a year.

VIII.

And all the rest rushed through the door,
And tumbled over one another,
And broke their skulls.—Upon the floor
Meanwhile sat Peter Bell, and swore,
And cursed his father and his mother ;

IX.

And raved of God and sin and death,
Blaspheming like an infidel ;
And said that with his clenched teeth
He'd seize the earth from underneath,
And drag it with him down to hell.

X.

As he was speaking, came a spasm,
And wrenched his gnashing teeth asunder.
Like one who sees a strange phantasm
He lay,—there was a silent chasm
Betwixt his upper jaw and under.

XI.

And yellow death lay on his face ;
And a fixed smile that was not human
Told, as I understand the case,
That he was gone to the wrong place :—
I heard all this from the old woman.

XII.

Then there came down from Langdale Pike
A cloud, with lightning, wind, and hail ;
It swept over the mountains like
An ocean, and I heard it strike
The woods and crags of Grasmere Vale.

XIII.

And I saw the black storm come
Nearer, minute after minute ;
Its thunder made the cataracts dumb ;
With hiss and clash and hollow hum,
It neared as if the Devil was in it.

XIV.

The Devil *was* in it :—he had bought
Peter for half-a-crown. And, when
The storm which bore him vanished, nought
That in the house that storm had caught
Was ever seen again.

XV.

The gaping neighbours came next day—
They found all vanished from the shore.
The bible whence he used to pray
Half scorched under a hen-coop lay ;
Smashed glass—and nothing more.

PART II.—THE DEVIL.

I.

THE Devil, I safely can aver,
Has neither hoof nor tail nor sting ;
Nor is he, as some sages swear,
A spirit neither here nor there,—
In nothing, yet in everything.

II.

He is—what we are : for sometimes
The Devil is a gentleman ;
At others a bard bartering rhymes
For sack ; a statesman spinning crimes ;
A swindler living as he can ;

III.

A thief who cometh in the night,
With whole boots and net pantaloons,
Like some one whom it were not right
To mention : or the luckless wight
From whom he steals nine silver spoons.

IV.

But in this case he did appear
Like a slop-merchant from Wapping,
And with smug face and eye severe
On every side did perk and peer
Till he saw Peter dead or napping.

V.

He had-on an upper Benjamin
(For he was of the driving schism)
In the which he wrapped his skin
From the storm he travelled in,
For fear of rheumatism.

VI.

He called the ghost out of the corse.
It was exceedingly like Peter,—
Only its voice was hollow and hoarse :
It had a queerish look of course :
Its dress too was a little neater.

VII.

The Devil knew not his name and lot,
Peter knew not that he was Bell :
Each had an upper stream of thought
Which made all seem as it was not,
Fitting itself to all things well.

VIII.

Peter thought he had parents dear,
Brothers, sisters, cousins, cronies,
In the fens of Lincolnshire.
He perhaps had found them there,
Had he boldly gone and shown his

IX.

Solemn phiz in his own village ;
Where he thought oft when a boy
He'd clomb the orchard-walls to pillage
The produce of his neighbour's tillage,
With marvellous pride and joy.

X.

And the Devil thought he had,
Mid the misery and confusion
Of an unjust war, just made
A fortune by the gainful trade
Of giving soldiers rations bad—
(The world is full of strange delusion) ;

XI.

That he had a mansion planned
In a square like Grosvenor Square ;
That he was aping fashion, and
That he now came to Westmoreland
To see what was romantic there.

XII.

And all this, though quite ideal—
Ready at a breath to vanish—
Was a state not more unreal
Than the peace he could not feel,
Or the care he could not banish.

XIII.

After a little conversation,
The Devil told Peter, if he chose,
He'd bring him to the world of fashion
By giving him a situation
In his own service—and new clothes.

XIV.

And Peter bowed, quite pleased and proud ;
And, after waiting some few days
For a new livery—dirty yellow
Turned up with black—the wretched fellow
Was bowled to Hell in the Devil's chaise.

PART III.—HELL.

I.

HELL is a city much like London—
A populous and a smoky city ;
There are all sorts of people undone,
And there is little or no fun done ;
Small justice shown, and still less pity.

II.

There is a Castles, and a Canning,
A Cobbett, and a Castlereagh ;
All sorts of caitiff corpses planning
All sorts of cozening, for trepanning
Corpses less corrupt than they.

III.

There is a * * *, who has lost
His wits, or sold them, none knows which ;
He walks about a double ghost,
And, though as thin as Fraud almost,
Ever grows more grim and rich.

IV.

There is a Chancery Court ; a King ;
A manufacturing mob ; a set
Of thieves who by themselves are sent
Similar thieves to represent ;
An army ; and a public debt :—

V.

Which last is a scheme of paper-money,
And means, being interpreted—
“Bees, keep your wax—give us the honey ;
And we will plant, while skies are sunny,
Flowers, which in winter serve instead.”

VI.

There is great talk of revolution,
And a great chance of despotism ;
German soldiers—camps—confusion—
Tumults—lotteries—rage—delusion—
Gin—suicide—and Methodism :—

VII.

Taxes too on wine and bread,
And meat and beer and tea and cheese ;
From which those patriots pure are fed
Who gorge, before they reel to bed
The tenfold essence of all these.

VIII.

There are mincing women, mewing
(Like cats, who *amant misère*)
Of their own virtue, and pursuing
Their gentler sisters to that ruin
Without which—what were chastity ?

IX.

Lawyers, judges, old hobnobbers,
Are there,—bailiffs—Chancellors—
Bishops—great and little robbers—
Rhymesters—pamphleteers—stock-jobbers—
Men of glory in the wars,—

X.

Things whose trade is over ladies
To lean, and flirt and stare and simper,
Till all that is divine in woman
Grows cruel, courteous, smooth, inhuman,
Crucified twixt a smile and whimper.

XI.

Thrusting, toiling, wailing, moiling,
Frowning, preaching—such a riot !
Each with never-ceasing labour,
Whilst he thinks he cheats his neighbour,
Cheating his own heart of quiet.

XII.

And all these meet at levees,—
Dinners convivial and political—
Suppers of epic poets—teas
Where small-talk dies in agonies—
Breakfasts professional and critical ;—

XIII.

Lunches and snacks so aldermanic
That one would furnish forth ten dinners,
Where reigns a Cretan-tongued panic,
Lest news—Russ, Dutch, or Alemannic—
Should make some losers, and some winners ;—

XIV.

At conversazioni, balls,
Conventicles, and drawing-rooms ;
Courts of law, committees, calls
Of a morning, clubs, book-stalls,
Churches, masquerades, and tombs.

XV.

And this is Hell : and in this smother
All are damnable and damned ;
Each one, damning, damns the other ;
They are damned by one another,—
By none other are they damned.

XVI.

'Tis a lie to say "God damns."
Where was Heaven's Attorney General
When they first gave out such flams ?
Let there be an end of shams :
They are mines of poisonous mineral.

XVII.

Statesmen damn themselves to be
Cursed ; and lawyers damn their souls
To the auction of a fee ;
Churchmen damn themselves to see
God's sweet love in burning coals :—

XVIII.

The rich are damned, beyond all cure,
To taunt and starve and trample on
The weak and wretched ; and the poor
Damn their broken hearts to endure
Stripe on stripe with groan on groan :—

XIX.

Sometimes the poor are damned indeed
To take—not means for being blest—
But Cobbett's snuff, revenge ; that weed
From which the worms that it doth feed
Squeeze less than they before possessed :—

XX.

And some few, like we know who,
Damned— but God alone knows why—
To believe their minds are given
To make this ugly Hell a Heaven ;
In which faith they live and die.

XXI.

Thus,—as, in a town plague-stricken,
Each man (be he sound or no)
Must indifferently sicken ;
As, when day begins to thicken,
None knows a pigeon from a crow,—

XXII.

So good and bad, sane and mad ;
The oppressor and the oppressed ;
Those who weep to see what others
Smile to inflict upon their brothers ;
Lovers, haters, worst and best ;

XXIII.

All are damned—They breathe an air,
Thick, infected, joy-dispelling ;
Each pursues what seems most fair,
Mining like moles through mind, and there
Scoop palace-caverns vast where Care
In thronèd state is ever dwelling.

PART IV.—SIN.

I.

Lo, Peter in Hell's Grosvenor Square,
A footman in the Devil's service !
And the misjudging world would swear
That every man in service there
To virtue would prefer vice.

II.

But Peter, though now damned, was not
What Peter was before damnation.
Men oftentimes prepare a lot
Which, ere it finds them, is not what
Suits with their genuine station.

III.

All things that Peter saw and felt
Had a peculiar aspect to him ;
And, when they came within the belt
Of his own nature, seemed to melt,
Like cloud to cloud, into him.

IV.

And so, the outward world uniting
To that within him, he became
Considerably uninviting
To those who, meditation slighting,
Were moulded in a different frame.

V.

And he scorned them, and they scorned him :
And he scorned all they did ; and they
Did all that men of their own trim
Are wont to do to please their whim,
Drinking, lying, swearing, play.

VI.

Such were his fellow-servants ; thus
His virtue, like our own, was built
Too much on that indignant fuss
Hypocrite Pride stirs up in us
To bully one another's guilt.

VII.

He had a mind which was somehow
At once circumference and centre
Of all he might or feel or know ;
Nothing went ever out, although
Something did ever enter.

VIII.

He had as much imagination
As a pint-pot ;—he never could
Fancy another situation,
From which to dart his contemplation,
Than that wherein he stood.

IX.

Yet his was individual mind,
And new-created all he saw
In a new manner, and refined
Those new creations, and combined
Them by a master-spirit's law.

X.

Thus—though unimaginative—
An apprehension clear, intense,
Of his mind's work, had made alive
The things it wrought on ; I believe
Wakening a sort of thought in sense.

XI.

But from the first 'twas Peter's drift
To be a kind of moral eunuch :
He touched the hem of Nature's shift,—
Felt faint,—and never dared uplift
The closest all-concealing tunic.

XII.

She laughed the while with an arch smile,
And kissed him with a sister's kiss,
And said : "My best Diogenes,
I love you well—but, if you please,
Tempt not again my deepest bliss.

XIII.

"'Tis you are cold ; for I, not coy,
Yield love for love, frank, warm, and true ;
And Burns, a Scottish peasant-boy—
His errors prove it—knew my joy
More, learned friend, than you.

XIV.

*" Bocca baciata non perde ventura,
Anzi rinnuova come fa la luna :—*
So thought Boccaccio, whose sweet words may cure a
Male prude, like you, from what you now endure, a
Low-tide in soul, like a stagnant laguna."

XV.

Then Peter rubbed his eyes severe,
And smoothed his spacious forehead down
With his broad palm ;—twixt love and fear,
He looked, as he no doubt felt, queer,
And in his dream sate down.

XVI.

The Devil was no uncommon creature ;
A leaden-witted thief—just huddled
Out of the dross and scum of Nature ;
A toad-like lump of limb and feature,
With mind and heart and fancy muddled.

XVII.

He was that heavy dull cold thing
The Spirit of Evil well may be :
A drone too base to have a sting ;
Who gluts, and grimes his lazy wing,
And calls lust " luxury."

XVIII.

Now he was quite the kind of wight
Round whom collect, at a fixed era,
Venison, turtle, hock, and claret—
Good cheer, and those who come to share it—
And best East Indian madeira.

XIX.

It was his fancy to invite
Men of science, wit, and learning,
Who came to lend each other light ;
He proudly thought that his gold's might
Had set those spirits burning.

XX.

And men of learning, science, wit,
Considered him as you and I
Think of some rotten tree, and sit
Lounging and dining under it,
Exposed to the wide sky.

XXI.

And all the while, with loose fat smile,
The willing wretch sat winking there ;
Believing 'twas his power that made
That jovial scene, and that all paid
Homage to his unnoticed chair.

XXII.

Though to be sure this place was Hell ;
He was the Devil ; and all they—
What though the claret circled well,
And wit, like ocean, rose and fell ?—
Were damned eternally.

PART V.—GRACE.

I.

AMONG the guests who often stayed
Till the Devil's petits-soupers,
A man there came, fair as a maid ;
And Peter noted what he said,
Standing behind his master's chair.

II.

He was a mighty poet and
A subtle-souled psychologist ;
All things he seemed to understand
Of old or new, of sea or land—
But his own mind, which was a mist.

III.

This was a man who might have turned
Hell into Heaven—and so in gladness
A Heaven unto himself have earned :
But he in shadows undiscerned
Trusted, and damned himself to madness.

IV.

He spoke of poetry, and how
Divine it was—"a light—a love—
A spirit which like wind doth blow
As it listeth, to and fro ;
A dew rained down from God above ;

V.

"A power which comes and goes like dream,
And which none can ever trace—
Heaven's light on earth—Truth's brightest beam."
And when he ceased there lay the gleam
Of those words upon his face.

VI.

Now Peter, when he heard such talk,
Would, heedless of a broken pate,
Stand like a man asleep, or baulk
Some wishing guest of knife or fork,
Or drop and break his master's plate.

VII.

At night he oft would start and wake
Like a lover, and began
In a wild measure songs to make
On moor and glen and rocky lake,
And on the heart of man ;

VIII.

And on the universal sky—
And the wide earth's bosom green,—
And the sweet strange mystery
Of what beyond these things may lie,
And yet remain unseen.

IX.

For in his thought he visited
The spots in which, ere dead and damned,
He his wayward life had led ;
Yet knew not whence the thoughts were fed
Which thus his fancy crammed.

X.

And these obscure remembrances
Stirred such harmony in Peter
That, whensoever he should please,
He could speak of rocks and trees
In poetic metre.

XI.

For, though it was without a sense
Of memory, yet he remembered well
Many a ditch and quickset fence ;
Of lakes he had intelligence ;
He knew something of heath and fell.

XII.

He had also dim recollections
Of pedlars tramping on their rounds ;
Milk pans and pails ; and odd collections
Of saws and proverbs ; and reflections
Old parsons make in burying-grounds.

XIII.

But Peter's verse was clear, and came
Announcing, from the frozen hearth
Of a cold age, that none might tame
The soul of that diviner flame
It augured to the earth :—

XIV.

Like gentle rains on the dry plains,
Making that green which late was grey,
Or like the sudden moon that stains
Some gloomy chamber's window-panes
With a broad light like day.

XV.

For language was in Peter's hand
Like clay while he was yet a potter ;
And he made songs for all the land
Sweet both to feel and understand,
As pipkins late to mountain cotter.

XVI.

And Mr. — the bookseller
Gave twenty pounds for some. Then, scorning
A footman's yellow coat to wear,
Peter (too proud of heart, I fear)
Instantly gave the Devil warning.

XVII.

Whereat the Devil took offence,
And swore in his soul a great oath then
That for his damned impertinence
He'd bring him to a proper sense
Of what was due to gentlemen !

PART VI.—DAMNATION.

I.

"OH that mine enemy had written
A book !" cried Job :—a fearful curse,
If to the Arab, as the Briton,
'Twas galling to be critic-bitten :
The Devil to Peter wished no worse.

II.

When Peter's next new book found vent,
The Devil to all the first Reviews
A copy of it slily sent,
With five-pound note as compliment,
And this short notice—" Pray abuse."

III.

Then *seriatim*, month and quarter,
Appeared such mad tirades !—One said :
" Peter seduced Mrs. Foy's daughter ;
Then drowned the mother in Ullswater,
The last thing as he went to bed."

IV.

Another : " Let him shave his head.
Where's Dr. Willis ?—Or is he joking ?
What does the rascal mean or hope,
No longer imitating Pope,
In that barbarian Shakespeare poking ?"

V.

One more : " Is incest not enough,
And must there be adultery too ?
Grace after meat ? Miscreant and liar !
Thief ! blackguard ! scoundrel ! fool ! Hell-fire
Is twenty times too good for you.

VI.

" By that last book of yours WE think
You've double-damned yourself to scorn ;
We warned you whilst yet on the brink
You stood. From your black name will shrink
The babe that 's unborn."

VII.

All these Reviews the Devil made
Up in a parcel, which he had
Safely to Peter's house conveyed.
For carriage, ten-pence Peter paid—
Untied them—read them—went half mad.

VIII.

"What !" cried he, "this is my reward
For nights of thought, and days of toil !
Do poets, but to be abhorred
By men of whom they never heard,
Consume their spirits' oil ?

IX.

"What have I done to them ?—and who
Is Mrs. Foy ? 'Tis very cruel
To speak of me and Betty so !
Adultery ! God defend me ! Oh !
I've half a mind to fight a duel.

X.

"Or," cried he, a grave look collecting,
"Is it my genius, like the moon,
Sets those who stand her face inspecting,
That face within their brain reflecting,
Like a crazed bell-chime, out of tune ?"

XI.

For Peter did not know the town ;
But thought, as country-readers do.
For half a guinea or a crown
He bought oblivion or renown
From God's own voice in a review.

XII.

All Peter did on this occasion
Was writing some sad stuff in prose.
It is a dangerous invasion
When poets criticize ; their station
Is to delight, not pose.

XIII.

The Devil then sent to Leipsic fair
For Born's translation of Kant's book ;
A world of words, tail foremost, where
Right, wrong—false, true—and foul and fair—
As in a lottery-wheel are shook.

XIV.

Five-thousand crammed octavo pages
Of German psychologies,—he
Who his *furor verborum* assuages
Thereon deserves just seven months' wages
More than will e'er be due to me.

XV.

I looked on them nine several days,
And then I saw that they were bad ;
A friend, too, spoke in their dispraise,—
He never read them ; with amaze
I found Sir William Drummond had.

XVI.

When the book came, the Devil sent
It to P. Verbovale Esquire,
With a brief note of compliment,
By that night's Carlisle mail. It went,
And set his soul on fire :—

XVII.

Fire which *ex luce præbens fumum*
Made him beyond the bottom see
Of truth's clear well. When I and you, Ma'am,
Go, as we shall do, *subter humum*,
We may know more than he.

XVIII.

Now Peter ran to seed in soul
Into a walking paradox
(For he was neither part nor whole,
Nor good nor bad, nor knave nor fool)
Among the woods and rocks.

XIX.

Furious he rode where late he ran,
Lashing and spurring his tame hobby ;
Turned to a formal puritan,
A solemn and unsexual man,—
He half believed *White Obi*.

XX.

This steed in vision he would ride,
High trotting over nine-inch bridges,
With Flibbertigibbet, imp of pride,
Mocking and mowing by his side—
A mad-brained goblin for a guide—
Over cornfields, gates, and hedges.

XXI.

After these ghastly rides, he came
Home to his heart, and found from thence
Much stolen of its accustomed flame ;
His thoughts grew weak, drowsy, and lame
Of their intelligence.

XXII.

To Peter's view, all seemed one hue ;
He was no whig, he was no tory ;
No deist and no christian he ;—
He got so subtle that to be
Nothing was all his glory.

XXIII.

One single point in his belief
From his organization sprung,—
The heart-enrooted faith, the chief
Ear in his doctrines' blighted sheaf,
That "happiness is wrong."

XXIV.

So thought Calvin and Dominic ;
So think their fierce successors, who
Even now would neither stint nor stick
Our flesh from off our bones to pick,
If they might "do their do."

XXV.

His morals thus were undermined :—
The old Peter Bell, the hard old potter,¹
Was born anew within his mind ;
He grew dull, harsh, sly, unrefined,
As when he tramped beside the Otter.

XXVI.

In the death-hues of agony
Lambently flashing from a fish,
Now Peter felt amused to see
Shades like a rainbow's rise and flee,
Mixed with a certain hungry wish.

XXVII.

So in his Country's dying face
He looked—and, lovely as she lay,
Seeking in vain his last embrace,
Wailing her own abandoned case,
With hardened sneer he turned away ;

XXVIII.

And coolly to his own Soul said :
“ Do you not think that we might make
A poem on her when she's dead ?—
Or no ! a thought is in my head !
Her shroud for a new sheet I'll take :

XXIX.

“ My wife wants one.—Let who will bury
This mangled corpse ! And I and you,
My dearest Soul, will then make merry,
As the Prince Regent did with Sherry,—
Ay, and at last desert me too.”

XXX.

And so his Soul would not be gay,
But moaned within him ; like a fawn
Moaning within a cave, it lay
Wounded and wasting, day by day,
Till all its life of life was gone.

XXXI.

As troubled skies stain waters clear,
The storm in Peter's heart and mind
Now made his verses dark and queer ;
They were the ghosts of what they were,
Shaking dim graveclothes in the wind :—

XXXII.

For he now raved enormous folly,
Of baptisms, Sunday-schools, and graves.
'Twould make George Colman melancholy
To have heard him, like a male Molly,
Chaunting those stupid staves.

XXXIII.

Yet the Reviews, who heaped abuse
On Peter while he wrote for freedom,
So soon as in his song they spy
The folly which soothes Tyranny,
Praise him, for those who feed 'em.

XXXIV.

He was a man too great to scan ;
A planet lost in truth's keen rays ;
His virtue, awful and prodigious ;
He was the most sublime, religious,
Pure-minded poet of these days.

XXXV.

As soon as he read that, cried Peter,
"Eureka ! I have found the way
To make a better thing of metre
Than e'er was made by living creature
Up to this blessed day."

XXXVI.

Then Peter wrote odes to the Devil ;—
In one of which he meekly said :
"May Carnage and Slaughter,
Thy niece and thy daughter,
May Rapine and Famine,
Thy gorge ever cramming,
Glut thee with living and dead !

XXXVII.

“ May Death and Damnation
And Consternation
Flit up from Hell with pure intent !
Slash them at Manchester,
Glasgow, Leeds, and Chester ;
Drench all with blood from Avon to Trent !

XXXVIII.

“ Let thy body-guard yeomen
Hew down babes and women,
And laugh with bold triumph till heaven be rent !
When Moloch in Jewry
Munched children with fury,
It was thou, Devil, dining with pure intent.”

PART VII.—DOUBLE DAMNATION.

I.

THE Devil now knew his proper cue.
Soon as he read the ode, he drove
To his friend Lord Mac Murderhouse's,
A man of interest in both houses,
And said :—"For money or for love,

II.

"Pray find some cure, or sinecure,
To feed from the superfluous taxes
A friend of ours—a poet : fewer
Have fluttered tamer to the lure
Than he." His lordship stands and racks his

III.

Stupid brains while one might count
As many beads as he had boroughs,—
At length replies (from his mean front,
Like one who rubs out an account,
Smoothing away the unmeaning furrows) :

IV.

"It happens fortunately, dear sir,
I can. I hope I need require
No pledge from you that he will stir
In our affairs ; like Oliver,
That he'll be worthy of his hire."

V.

These words exchanged, the news sent off
To Peter, home the Devil hied,—
Took to his bed. He had no cough,
No doctor,—meat and drink enough,—
Yet that same night he died.

VI.

The Devil's corpse was leaded down ;
His decent heirs enjoyed his pelf,
Mourning-coaches many a one
Followed his hearse along the town :—
Where was the Devil himself?

VII.

When Peter heard of his promotion,
His eyes grew like two stars for bliss.
There was a bow of sleek devotion
Engendering in his back ; each motion
Seemed a Lord's shoe to kiss.

VIII.

He hired a house, bought plate, and made
A genteel drive up to his door,
With sifted gravel neatly laid,—
As if defying all who said
Peter was ever poor.

IX.

But a disease soon struck into
The very life and soul of Peter.
He walked about—slept—had the hue
Of health upon his cheeks—and few
Dug better—none a heartier eater :—

X.

And yet a strange and horrid curse
Clung upon Peter, night and day.
Month after month the thing grew worse,
And deadlier than in this my verse
I can find strength to say.

XI.

Peter was dull—he was at first
Dull—oh so dull, so very dull !
Whether he talked, wrote, or rehearsed,
Still with his dullness was he cursed—
Dull—beyond all conception, dull.

XII.

No one could read his books—no mortal,
But a few natural friends, would hear him ;
The parson came not near his portal ;
His state was like that of the immortal
Described by Swift—no man could bear him.

XIII.

His sister, wife, and children, yawned,
With a long, slow, and drear ennui
All human patience far beyond ;
Their hopes of heaven each would have pawned
Anywhere else to be.

XIV.

But in his verse and in his prose
The essence of his dullness was
Concentred and compressed so close
T'would have made Guatimozin doze
On his red gridiron of brass.

XV.

A printer's boy, folding those pages,
Fell slumbrously upon one side,
Like those famed Seven who slept three ages.
To wakeful frenzy's vigil rages,
As opiates, were the same applied.

XVI.

Even the Reviewers who were hired
To do the work of his reviewing,
With adamantine nerves, grew tired ;—
Gaping and torpid they retired,
To dream of what they should be doing.

XVII.

And worse and worse the drowsy curse
Yawned in him till it grew a pest ;
A wide contagious atmosphere
Creeping like cold through all things near ;
A power to infect and to infest.

XVIII.

His servant-maids and dogs grew dull ;
His kitten, late a sportive elf ;
The woods and lakes so beautiful
Of dim stupidity were full ;
All grew dull as Peter's self.

XIX.

The earth under his feet, the springs
Which lived within it a quick life—
The air, the winds of many wings
That fan it with new murmurings—
Were dead to their harmonious strife.

XX.

The birds and beasts within the wood,
The insects and each creeping thing,
Were now a silent multitude ;
Love's work was left unwrought—no brood
Near Peter's house took wing.

XXI.

And every neighbouring cottager
Stupidly yawned upon the other ;
No jackass brayed, no little cur
Cocked up his ears ; no man would stir
To save a dying mother.

XXII.

Yet all from that charmed district went
But some half-idiot and half-knave,
Who, rather than pay any rent,
Would live with marvellous content
Over his father's grave.

XXIII.

No bailiff dared within that space,
For fear of the dull charm, to enter ;
A man would bear upon his face,
For fifteen months in any case,
The yawn of such a venture.

XXIV.

Seven miles above—below—around—
This pest of dullness holds its sway ;
A ghastly life without a sound.
To Peter's soul the spell is bound—
How should it ever pass away ?

SHELLEY'S NOTES TO PETER BELL THE THIRD.

P. 229.

And a polygamic Potter.

The oldest scholiasts read

"A dodecagamic Potter."

This is at once more descriptive and more megalophonous,—but the alliteration of the text had captivated the vulgar ear of the herd of later commentators.

P. 230.

He oiled his hair.

To those who have not duly appreciated the distinction between *Whale* and *Russia* oil, this attribute might rather seem to belong to the Dandy than the Evangelic. The effect, when to the windward, is indeed so similar that it requires a subtle naturalist to discriminate the animals. They belong, however, to distinct genera.

P. 237.

Like cats, who amant misère.

One of the attributes in Linnæus's description of the Cat. To a similar cause the caterwauling of more than one species of this genus is to be referred;—except, indeed, that the poor quadruped is compelled to quarrel with its own pleasures, whilst the biped is supposed only to quarrel with those of others.

P. 237.

*Of their own virtue, and pursuing**Their gentler sisters to that ruin**Without which—what were chastity?*

What would this husk and excuse for a virtue be without its kernel prostitution, or the kernel prostitution without this husk of a virtue? I wonder the women of the town do not form an association, like the Society for the Suppression of Vice, for the support of what may be called the "King, Church, and Constitution," of their order. But this subject is almost too horrible for a joke.

P. 238.

'Tis a lie to say "God damns."

This libel on our national oath, and this accusation of all our countrymen of being in the daily practice of solemnly asseverating the most enormous falsehood, I fear deserves the notice of a more active Attorney General than that here alluded to.

P. 248.

From God's own voice.

Vox populi vox Dei. As Mr Godwin truly observes of a more famous saying, *of some merit as a popular maxim, but totally destitute of philosophical accuracy.*

P. 249.

*When the book came, the Devil sent**It to P. Verbovale Esquire.*

Quasi, *Qui valet verba*—i.e. all the words which have been, are, or may be, expended by, for, against, with, or on, him. A sufficient proof of the utility of this history. Peter's progenitor who selected this name seems to have possessed a *pure anticipated cognition* of the nature and modesty of this ornament of his posterity.

P. 251.

As when he tramped beside the Otter.

A famous river in the new Atlantis of the Dynastophilic Pantisocratists.

P. 251.

*Shades like a rainbow's rise and flee,
Mixed with a certain hungry wish.*

See the description of the beautiful colours produced during the agonizing death of a number of trout, in the fourth part of a long poem in blank verse, published within a few years. That poem contains curious evidence of the gradual hardening of a strong but circumscribed sensibility, of the perversion of a penetrating but panic-stricken understanding. The author might have derived a lesson which he had probably forgotten from these sweet and sublime verses :

"The lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she ¹ shows and what conceals—
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

P. 253.

It was thou, Devil, dining with pure intent.

It is curious to observe how often extremes meet. Cobbett and Peter use the same language for a different purpose : Peter is indeed a sort of metrical Cobbett. Cobbett is, however, more mischievous than Peter, because he pollutes a holy and now unconquerable cause with the principles of legitimate murder ; whilst the other only makes a bad one ridiculous and odious. If either Peter or Cobbett should see this note, each will feel more indignation at being compared to the other than at any censure implied in the moral perversion laid to their charge.

¹ Nature.

NOTE ON PETER BELL THE THIRD, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

IN this new edition I have added *Peter Bell the Third*. A critique on Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* reached us at Leghorn, which amused Shelley exceedingly, and suggested this poem.

I need scarcely observe that nothing personal to the author of *Peter Bell* is intended in this poem. No man ever admired Wordsworth's poetry more ;—he read it perpetually, and taught others to appreciate its beauties. This poem is, like all others written by Shelley, ideal. He conceived the idealism of a poet—a man of lofty and creative genius—quitting the glorious calling of discovering and announcing the beautiful and good, to support and propagate ignorant prejudices and pernicious errors ; imparting to the unenlightened, not that ardour for truth and spirit of toleration which Shelley looked on as the sources of the moral improvement and happiness of mankind, but false and injurious opinions, that evil was good, and that ignorance and force were the best allies of purity and virtue. His idea was that a man gifted, even as transcendently as the author of *Peter Bell*, with the highest qualities of genius, must, if he fostered such errors, be infected with dullness. This poem was written as a warning—not as a narration of the reality. He was unacquainted personally with Wordsworth, or with Coleridge (to whom he alludes in the fifth part of the poem), and therefore, I repeat, his poem is purely ideal ;—it contains something of criticism on the compositions of those great poets, but nothing injurious to the men themselves.

No poem contains more of Shelley's peculiar views with regard to the errors into which many of the wisest have fallen, and the pernicious effects of certain opinions on society. Much of it is beautifully written : and, though, like the burlesque drama of *Swellfoot*, it must be looked on as a plaything, it has so much merit and poetry—so much of *himself* in it—that it cannot fail to interest greatly, and by right belongs to the world for whose instruction and benefit it was written.

THE MASQUE OF ANARCHY:

WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE MASSACRE AT MANCHESTER.

I.

As I lay asleep in Italy,
There came a voice from over the sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

II.

I met Murder on the way—
He had a mask like Castlereagh.
Very smooth he looked, yet grim ;
Seven bloodhounds followed him.

III.

All were fat ; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew,
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

IV.

Next came Fraud, and he had-on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown.
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to millstones as they fell ;

V.

And the little children who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

VI.

Clothed with the bible, as with light
And the shadows of the night,
Like Sidmouth next, Hypocrisy
On a crocodile rode by.

VII.

And many more Destructions played
In this ghastly masquerade,—
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.

VIII.

Last came Anarchy ; he rode
On a white horse splashed with blood ;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

IX.

And he wore a kingly crown,
And in his grasp a sceptre shone ;
On his brow this mark I saw—
"I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW."

X.

With a pace stately and fast
Over English land he passed,
Trampling to a mire of blood
The adoring multitude.

XI.

And a mighty troop around
With their trampling shook the ground,
Waving each a bloody sword
For the service of their lord.

XII.

And with glorious triumph they
Rode through England, proud and gay,
Drunk as with intoxication
Of the wine of desolation.

XIII.

O'er fields and towns, from sea to sea,
Passed the pageant swift and free,
Tearing up and trampling down,
Till they came to London town.

XIV.

And each dweller, panic-stricken,
Felt his heart with terror sicken,
Hearing the tempestuous cry
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

XV.

For with pomp to meet him came,
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,
The hired murderers who did sing,
"Thou art God, and Law, and King !

XVI.

"We have waited, weak and lone,
For thy coming, Mighty One !
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold ;
Give us glory, and blood, and gold."

XVII.

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
To the earth their pale brows bowed,—
Like a bad prayer not over-loud,
Whispering "Thou art Law and God !"

XVIII.

Then all cried with one accord,
"Thou art King, and God, and Lord ;
Anarchy, to thee we bow ;
Be thy name made holy now !"

XIX.

And Anarchy the skeleton
Bowed and grinned to every one
As well as if his education
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

XX.

For he knew the palaces
Of our kings were nightly his ;
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,
And the gold-inwoven robe.

XXI.

So he sent his slaves before
To seize upon the Bank and Tower,
And was proceeding with intent
To meet his pensioned parliament,

XXII.

When one fled past, a maniac maid,
And her name was Hope, she said,
But she looked more like Despair ;
And she cried out in the air :

XXIII.

" My father Time is weak and grey
With waiting for a better day ;
See how idiot-like he stands,
Fumbling with his palsied hands !

XXIV.

" He has had child after child,
And the dust of death is piled
Over every one but me—
Misery ! oh Misery ! "

XXV.

Then she lay down in the street
Right before the horses' feet,
Expecting with a patient eye
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy :—

XXVI.

When between her and her foes
A mist, a light, an image rose,
Small at first, and weak and frail
Like the vapour of a vale :

XXVII.

Till, as clouds grow on the blast
Like tower-crowned giants striding fast,
And glare with lightnings as they fly,
And speak in thunder to the sky,

XXVIII.

It grew—a shape arrayed in mail
Brighter than the viper's scale,
And upborne on wings whose grain
Was as the light of sunny rain.

XXIX.

On its helm seen far away
A planet like the morning's lay ;
And those plumes its light rained through,
Like a shower of crimson dew.

XXX.

With step as soft as wind it passed
O'er the heads of men : so fast
That they knew the presence there,
And looked—and all was empty air.

XXXI.

As flowers beneath May's footstep waken,
As stars from Night's loose hair are shaken,
As waves arise when loud winds call,
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

XXXII.

And the prostrate multitude
Looked—and, ankle-deep in blood,
Hope, that maiden most serene,
Was walking with a quiet mien ;

XXXIII.

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,
Lay dead earth upon the earth ;
The horse of Death, tameless as wind,
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind
To dust the murderers thronged behind.

XXXIV.

A rushing light of clouds and splendour,
A sense awakening and yet tender,
Was heard and felt—and at its close
These words of joy and fear arose ;

XXXV.

As if their own indignant Earth,
Which gave the sons of England birth,
Had felt their blood upon her brow,
And, shuddering with a mother's throe,

XXXVI.

Had turned every drop of blood
By which her face had been bedewed
To an accent unwithstood,
As if her heart had cried aloud.

XXXVII.

"Men of England, heirs of glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty mother,
Hopes of her and one another !

XXXVIII.

"Rise, like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number !
Shake your chains to earth, like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you !
Ye are many, they are few.

XXXIX.

"What is Freedom ? Ye can tell
That which Slavery is too well,
For its very name has grown
To an echo of your own.

XL.

"'Tis to work and have such pay
As just keeps life from day to day
In your limbs as in a cell
For the tyrants' use to dwell :

XLI.

"So that ye for them are made
Loom and plough and sword and spade ;
With or without your own will, bent
To their defence and nourishment.

XLII.

"'Tis to see your children weak
With their mothers pine and peak
When the winter winds are bleak :—
They are dying whilst I speak.

XLIII.

"'Tis to hunger for such diet
As the rich man in his riot
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye.

XLIV.

"'Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from Toil a thousandfold
More than e'er its substance could
In the tyrannies of old :

XLV.

" Paper coin—that forgery
Of the title-deeds which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.

XLVI.

"'Tis to be a slave in soul,
And to hold no strong control
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye.

XLVII.

" And, at length when ye complain
With a murmur weak and vain,
'Tis to see the tyrant's crew
Ride over your wives and you :—
Blood is on the grass like dew !

XLVIII.

" Then it is to feel revenge,
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood, and wrong for wrong :
Do not thus when ye are strong !

XLIX.

" Birds find rest in narrow nest,
When weary of their wingèd quest ;
Beasts find fare in woody lair
When storm and snow are in the air ;

L.

" Horses, oxen, have a home
When from daily toil they come ;
Household dogs, when the wind roars,
Find a home within warm doors ;

LI.

" Asses, swine, have litter spread,
And with fitting food are fed ;
All things have a home but one :—
Thou, O Englishman, hast none !

LII.

" This is Slavery !—Savage men,
Or wild beasts within a den,
Would endure not as ye do :
But such ills they never knew.

LIII.

" What art thou, Freedom ? Oh could slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand, tyrants would flee
Like a dream's dim imagery.

LIV.

" Thou art not, as impostors say,
A shadow soon to pass away,
A superstition, and a name
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

LV.

" For the labourer, thou art bread
And a comely table spread,
From his daily labour come
To a neat and happy home.

LVI.

"Thou art clothes and fire and food
For the trampled multitude.
No—in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be
As in England now we see !

LVII.

"To the rich thou art a check ;
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim, thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.

LVIII.

"Thou art justice : ne'er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold
As laws are in England ; thou
Shield'st alike the high and low.

LIX.

"Thou art wisdom : freemen never
Dream that God will damn for ever
All who think those things untrue
Of which priests make such ado.

LX.

"Thou art peace : never by thee
Would blood and treasure wasted be
As tyrants wasted them when all
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

LXI.

"What if English toil and blood
Was poured forth even as a flood ?
It availed, O Liberty,
To dim but not extinguish thee.

LXII.

"Thou art love : the rich have kissed
Thy feet, and, like him following Christ,
Give their substance to the free
And through the rough world follow thee,—

LXIII.

" Or turn their wealth to arms, and make
War, for thy beloved sake,
On wealth and war and fraud, whence they
Drew the power which is their prey.

LXIV.

" Science, poetry, and thought,
Are thy lamps ; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
Such they curse their Maker not.

LXV.

" Spirit, patience, gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless,
Art thou. Let deeds, not words, express
Thine exceeding loveliness.

LXVI.

" Let a great assembly be
Of the fearless and the free
On some spot of English ground
Where the plains stretch wide around.

LXVII.

" Let the blue sky overhead,
The green earth on which ye tread,
All that must eternal be,
Witness the solemnity.

LXVIII.

" From the corners uttermost
Of the bounds of English coast ;
From every hut, village, and town,
Where those who live and suffer moan
For others' misery or their own ;

LXIX.

" From the workhouse and the prison
Where, pale as corpses newly risen,
Women, children, young and old,
Groan for pain, and weep for cold ;

LXX.

" From the haunts of daily life
Where is waged the daily strife
With common wants and common cares
Which sows the human heart with tares ;

LXXI.

" Lastly, from the palaces
Where the murmur of distress
Echoes like the distant sound
Of a wind alive around

LXXII.

" Those prison-halls of wealth and fashion
Where some few feel such compassion,
For those who groan and toil and wail,
As must make their brethren pale ;—

LXXIII.

" Ye who suffer woes untold
Or to feel or to behold
Your lost country bought and sold
With a price of blood and gold ;—

LXXIV.

" Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free !

LXXV.

" Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,
And wide as targes let them be,
With their shade to cover ye.

LXXVI.

" Let the tyrants pour around
With a quick and startling sound,
Like the loosening of a sea,
Troops of armed emblazonry.

LXXVII.

" Let the charged artillery drive,
Till the dead air seems alive
With the clash of clanging wheels,
And the tramp of horses' heels.

LXXVIII.

" Let the fixèd bayonet
Gleam with sharp desire to wet
Its bright point in English blood,
Looking keen as one for food.

LXXIX.

" Let the horsemen's scimitars
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars
Thirsting to eclipse their burning
In a sea of death and mourning.

LXXX.

" Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms, and looks which are
Weapons of an unvanquished war.

LXXXI.

" And let Panic, who outspeeds
The career of armèd steeds,
Pass, a disregarded shade,
Through your phalanx undismayed.

LXXXII.

" Let the laws of your own land,
Good or ill, between ye stand,
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
Arbiters of the dispute :—

LXXXIII.

" The old laws of England—they
Whose reverend heads with age are grey,
Children of a wiser day ;
And whose solemn voice must be
Thine own echo—Liberty !

LXXXIV.

"On those who first should violate
Such sacred heralds in their state
Rest the blood that must ensue ;
And it will not rest on you.

LXXXV.

"And, if then the tyrants dare,
Let them ride among you there,
Slash and stab and maim and hew :
What they like, that let them do.

LXXXVI.

"With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay,
Till their rage has died away.

LXXXVII.

"Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.

LXXXVIII.

'Every woman in the land
Will point at them as they stand—
They will hardly dare to greet
Their acquaintance in the street :

LXXXIX.

"And the bold true warriors
Who have hugged danger in wars
Will turn to those who would be free,
Ashamed of such base company :

XC.

"And that slaughter to the nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular,
A volcano heard afar ;

XCI.

"And these words shall then become
Like Oppression's thundered doom,
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again—again—again !

XCII.

"Rise, like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number !
Shake your chains to earth, like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you !
Ye are many—they are few."

NOTE ON THE MASQUE OF ANARCHY, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

THOUGH Shelley's first eager desire to excite his countrymen to resist openly the oppressions existent during "the good old times" had faded with early youth, still his warmest sympathies were for the people. He was a republican, and loved a democracy. He looked on all human beings as inheriting an equal right to possess the dearest privileges of our nature; the necessities of life when fairly earned by labour, and intellectual instruction. His hatred of any despotism that looked upon the people as not to be consulted, or protected from want and ignorance, was intense. He was residing near Leghorn, at Villa Valsovano, writing *The Cenci*, when the news of the Manchester Massacre reached us; it roused in him violent emotions of indignation and compassion. The great truth that the many, if accordant and resolute, could control the few, as was shown some years after, made him long to teach his injured countrymen how to resist. Inspired by these feelings, he wrote the *Masque of Anarchy*, which he sent to his friend Leigh Hunt, to be inserted in the *Examiner*, of which he was then the Editor.

"I did not insert it," Leigh Hunt writes in his valuable and interesting preface to this poem, when he printed it in 1832, "because I thought that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the sincerity and kind-heartedness of the spirit that walked in this flaming robe of verse." Days of outrage have passed away, and with them the exasperation that would cause such an appeal to the many to be injurious. Without being aware of them, they at one time acted on his suggestions, and gained the day. But they rose when human life was respected by the Minister in power; such was not the case during the Administration which excited Shelley's abhorrence.

The poem was written for the people, and is therefore in a more popular tone than usual: portions strike as abrupt and unpolished, but many stanzas are all his own. I heard him repeat, and admired, those beginning

"My Father Time is old and grey,"

before I knew to what poem they were to belong. But the most touching passage is that which describes the blessed effects of liberty; it might make a patriot of any man whose heart was not wholly closed against his humbler fellow-creatures.

ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS;
OR, SWELLFOOT THE TYRANT.

A TRAGEDY, IN TWO ACTS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL DORIC.

—Choose Reform or Civil War,
When through thy streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A Consort-Queen shall hunt a King with Hogs,
Riding on the Ionian Minotaur.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS tragedy is one of a triad, or system of three plays (an arrangement according to which the Greeks were accustomed to connect their dramatic representations), elucidating the wonderful and appalling fortunes of the Swellfoot dynasty. It was evidently written by some learned Theban; and, from its characteristic dullness, apparently before the duties on the importation of Attic salt had been repealed by the Bœotarchs. The tenderness with which he treats the Pigs proves him to have been a *sus Bœotiæ*, possibly *Epicuri de grege porcus*; for, as the poet observes—

“A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind.”

No liberty has been taken with the translation of this remarkable piece of antiquity, except the suppressing a seditious and blasphemous chorus of the Pigs and Bulls at the last act. The word *Hoydipouse* (or more properly *Œdipus*) has been rendered literally Swellfoot, without its having been conceived necessary to determine whether a swelling of the hind or the fore feet of the Swinish Monarch is particularly indicated.

Should the remaining portions of this tragedy be found, entitled *Swellfoot in Angaria* and *Charité*, the translator might be tempted to give them to the reading public.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

TYRANT SWELLFOOT, *King of Thebes.*
 IONA TAURINA, *his Queen.*
 MAMMON, *Arch-Priest of Famine.*
 PYRGANAX, } *Wizards, Ministers of*
 DAKRY, } *SWELLFOOT.*
 LAOCTONOS, }
 The GADFLY.

The LEECH.
 The RAT.
 The MINOTAUR.
 MOSES, *the Sow-gelder.*
 SOLOMON, *the Porkman.*
 ZEPHANIAH, *Pig-butcher.*

CHORUS of the *Swinish Multitude.*
Guards, Attendants, Priests, &c., &c.

SCENE.—*Thebes.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A magnificent Temple, built of thigh-bones and death's-heads, and tiled with scalps. Over the altar the statue of Famine, veiled; a number of Boars, Sows, and Sucking Pigs, crowned with thistle, shamrock, and oak, sitting on the steps, and clinging round the altar of the Temple.*

Enter SWELLFOOT, in his royal robes, without perceiving the Pigs.

Swellfoot. Thou supreme Goddess, by whose power divine
 These graceful limbs are clothed in proud array

[He contemplates himself with satisfaction.]

Of gold and purple, and this kingly paunch
 Swells like a sail before a favouring breeze,
 And these most sacred nether promontories
 Lie satisfied with layers of fat, and these
 Bœotian cheeks, like Egypt's pyramid
 (Nor with less toil were their foundations laid),
 Sustain the cone of my untroubled brain,
 That point, the emblem of a pointless nothing !
 Thou to whom Kings and laurelled Emperors,
 Radical-butchers, Paper-money-millers,
 Bishops and Deacons, and the entire army
 Of those fat martyrs to the persecution
 Of stifling turtle-soup and brandy-devils,
 Offer their secret vows ! thou plenteous Ceres
 Of their Eleusis, hail !

The Swine. Eigh ! eigh ! eigh ! eigh !

Swellfoot. Ha ! what are ye,

Who, crowned with leaves devoted to the Furies,
 Cling round this sacred shrine ?

Swine. Aigh ! aigh ! aigh !

Swellfoot. What ! ye that are
The very beasts that, offered at her altar
With blood and groans, salt-cake and fat and inwards,
Ever propitiate her reluctant will
When taxes are withheld ?

Swine. Ugh ! ugh ! ugh !

Swellfoot. What ! ye who grub
With filthy snouts my red potatoes up
In Allen's rushy Bog ? who eat the oats
Up, from my cavalry in the Hebrides ?
Who swill the hog-wash soup my cooks digest
From bones, and rags, and scraps of shoe-leather,
Which should be given to cleaner Pigs than you ?

THE SWINE.—SEMICHORUS I

The same, alas ! the same ;
Though only now the name
Of Pig remains to me.

SEMICHORUS II.

If 'twere your kingly will
Us wretched Swine to kill,
What should we yield to thee ?

Swellfoot. Why, skin and bones, and some few hairs for
mortar.

CHORUS OF SWINE.

I have heard your Laureate sing
That pity was a royal thing.
Under your mighty ancestors, we Pigs
Were blest as nightingales on myrtle-sprigs,
Or grasshoppers that live on noonday dew,
And sung, old annals tell, as sweetly too.
But now our sties are fallen-in, we catch
The murrain and the mange, the scab and itch ;
Sometimes your royal dogs tear down our thatch,
And then we seek the shelter of a ditch ;
Hog-wash, or grains, or ruta-baga, none
Has yet been ours since your reign begun.

FIRST SOW.

My Pigs, 'tis in vain to tug !

SECOND SOW.

I could almost eat my litter !

FIRST FIG.

I suck, but no milk will come from the dug.

SECOND FIG.

Our skin and our bones would be bitter.

THE BOARS.

We fight for this rag of greasy rug,
Though a trough of wash would be fitter.

SEMICHORUS.

Happier Swine were they than we,

Drowned in the Gadarean Sea!—

I wish that Pity would drive out the devils
Which in your royal bosom hold their revels,
And sink us in the waves of your compassion.

Alas! the Pigs are an unhappy nation!

Now, if your Majesty would have our bristles

To bind your mortar with, or fill our colons
With rich blood, or make brawn out of our gristles,

In policy—ask else your royal Solons—

You ought to give us hog-wash and clean straw,
And sties well thatched; besides, it is the law!

Swellfoot. This is sedition and rank blasphemy!
Ho there, my guards!

Enter a GUARD.

Guard. Your sacred Majesty?

Swellfoot. Call in the Jews, Solomon the court-porkman,
Moses the sow-gelder, and Zephaniah
The hog-butcher.

Guard. They are in waiting, sire.

Enter SOLOMON, MOSES, and ZEPHANIAH.

Swellfoot. Out with your knife, old Moses, and spay those
Sows

[*The Pigs run about in consternation.*

That load the earth with Pigs; cut close and deep.

Moral restraint I see has no effect,

Nor prostitution, nor our own example,

Starvation, typhus-fever, war, nor prison.

This was the art which the Arch-priest of Famine

Hinted at in his charge to the Theban clergy.

Cut close and deep, good Moses.

Moses.

Let your Majesty

Keep the Boars quiet, else—

Swellfoot. Zephaniah, cut
That fat Hog's throat ; the brute seems overfed.
Seditious hunks ! to whine for want of grains !

Zephaniah. Your sacred Majesty, he has the dropsy ;
We shall find pints of hydatids in 's liver.
He has not half an inch of wholesome fat
Upon his carious ribs.

Swellfoot. 'Tis all the same ;—
He'll serve instead of riot-money when
Our murmuring troops bivouaque in Thebes streets ;
And January winds, after a day
Of butchering, will make them relish carrion.
Now, Solomon, I'll sell you in a lump
The whole kit of them.

Solomon. Why, your Majesty,
I could not give—

Swellfoot. Kill them out of the way ;
That shall be price enough. And let me hear
Their everlasting grunts and whines no more !

[*Exeunt, driving-in the Swine.*]

*Enter MAMMON, the Arch-Priest ; and PYRGANAX,¹ Chief of the
Council of Wizards.*

Pyrganax. The future looks as black as death ; a cloud,
Dark as the frown of Hell, hangs over it.
The troops grow mutinous—the revenue fails—
There's something rotten in us—for the level
Of the state slopes, its very bases topple ;
The boldest turn their backs upon themselves !

Mammon. Why, what's the matter, my dear fellow, now ?
Do the troops mutiny ?—decimate some regiments ;
Does money fail ?—come to my mint—coin paper,
Till gold be at a discount, and, ashamed
To show his bilious face, go purge himself,
In emulation of her vestal whiteness.

Pyrganax. Oh would that this were all ! The oracle !

Mammon. Why, it was I who spoke that oracle ;
And whether I was dead-drunk or inspired
I cannot well remember—nor, in truth,
The oracle itself.

Pyrganax. The words went thus :—
“ Bœotia, choose reform or civil war,
When through thy streets,¹ instead of hare with dogs,

A Consort-Queen shall hunt a King with Hogs,
Riding on the Ionian Minotaur."

Mammon. Now, if the oracle had ne'er foretold
This sad alternative, it must arrive,
Or not ; and so it must now that it has ;
And whether I was urged by grace divine
Or Lesbian liquor to declare these words
(Which must, as all words must, be false or true)
It matters not : for the same Power made all,
Oracle, wine, and me and you—or none—
'Tis the same thing. If you but knew as much
Of oracles as I do——

Pyrganax. You Arch-priests
Believe in nothing ; if you were to dream
Of a particular number in the lottery,
You would not buy the ticket?

Mammon. Yet our tickets
Are seldom blanks. But what steps have you taken?
For prophecies, when once they get abroad,
Like liars who tell the truth to serve their ends,
Or hypocrites who, from assuming virtue,
Do the same actions that the virtuous do,
Contrive their own fulfilment. This Iona—
Well—you know what the chaste Pasiphae did,
Wife to that most religious King of Crete,
And still how popular the tale is here ;
And these dull swine of Thebes boast their descent
From the free Minotaur. You know they still
Call themselves Bulls, though thus degenerate ;
And everything relating to a bull
Is popular and respectable in Thebes :—
Their arms are seven bulls in a field gules ;
They think their strength consists in eating beef.
Now there were danger in the precedent,
If Queen Iona——

Pyrganax. I have taken good care
That shall not be. I struck the crust o' the earth
With this enchanted rod, and hell lay bare :
And from a cavern full of ugly shapes
I chose a Leech, a Gadfly, and a Rat.
The Gadfly was the same which Juno sent
To agitate Io, and which Ezekiel mentions

That the Lord whistled-for out of the mountains
 Of utmost Ethiopia, to torment
 Mesopotamian Babylon. The beast
 Has a loud trumpet like the scarabee ;
 His crooked tail is barbed with many stings,
 Each able to make a thousand wounds, and each
 Immedicable ; from his convex eyes
 He sees fair things in many hideous shapes,
 And trumpets all his falsehood to the world.
 Like other beetles, he is fed on dung :
 He has eleven feet with which he crawls,
 Trailing a blistering slime. And this foul beast
 Has tracked Iona from the Theban limits,
 From isle to isle, from city unto city ;
 Urging her flight from the far Chersonese
 To fabulous Solyma, and the Ætnean isle,
 Ortygia, Melite, and Calypso's Rock,
 And the swart tribes of Garamant and Fez,
 Æolia and Elysium, and thy shores,
 Parthenope, which now, alas ! are free,
 And through the fortunate Saturnian land,
 Into the darkness of the West.

Mammon.

But if

This Gadfly should drive Iona *hither* ?

Pyrganax. Gods ! what an *if* ! But there is my grey Rat ;
 So thin with want he can crawl in and out
 Of any narrow chink and filthy hole ;
 And he shall creep into her dressing-room,
 And—

Mammon. My dear friend, where are your wits ? as if
 She does not always toast a piece of cheese,
 And bait the trap ! and rats, when lean enough
 To crawl through *such* chinks——

Pyrganax.

But my Leech—a leech

Fit to suck blood, with lubricous round rings,
 Capaciously expatiative, which make
 His little body like a red balloon,
 As full of blood as that of hydrogen,
 Sucked from men's hearts ; insatiably he sucks
 And clings and pulls—a horseleech, whose deep maw
 The plethoric King Swellfoot could not fill,
 And who, till full, will cling for ever.

Mammon.

This

For Queen Iona might suffice, and less.
 But 'tis the Swinish Multitude I fear ;
 And in that fear I have——

Pyrganax.

Done what ?

Mammon.

Disinherited

My eldest son Chrysaor, because he
 Attended public meetings, and would always
 Stand prating there of commerce, public faith,
 Economy, and unadulterate coin,
 And other topics ultra-radical ;
 And have entailed my estate, called the Fool's Paradise,
 And funds, in fairy-money, bonds, and bills,
 Upon my accomplished daughter Banknotina,
 And married her to the Gallows.

Pyrganax.

A good match !

Mammon. A high connexion, Pyrganax. The bridegroom
 Is of a very ancient family,
 Of Hounslow Heath, Tyburn, and the New Drop,
 And has great influence in both Houses. Oh
 He makes the fondest husband ! nay, *too* fond :—
 New-married people should not kiss in public ;
 But the poor souls love one another so !
 And then my little grandchildren, the Gibbets,
 Promising children as you ever saw,—
 The young playing at hanging, the elder learning
 How to hold radicals. They are well taught too,
 For every Gibbet says its catechism,
 And reads a select chapter in the bible
 Before it goes to play. [*A most tremendous humming is heard.*]

Pyrganax.

Ha ! what do I hear ?

*Enter GADFLY, followed by LEECH and RAT.**Mammon.* Your Gadfly, as it seems, is tired of gadding.

GADFLY.

Hum ! hum ! hum !
 From the lakes of the Alps, and the cold grey scalps
 Of the mountains, I come ;
 Hum ! hum ! hum !
 From Morocco and Fez, and the high palaces
 Of golden Byzantium ;
 From the temples divine of old Palestine,
 From Athens and Rome,

With a ha and a hum
I come, I come !

All in-doors and windows
Were open to me :
I saw all that sin does,
Which lamps hardly see
That burn in the night by the curtained bed, —
The impudent lamps ! for they blushed not red.
Dinging and singing,
From slumber I rung her,
Loud as the clank of an ironmonger !
Hum ! hum ! hum !

Far, far, far,
With the trump of my lips, and the sting at my hips,
I drove her—afar !
Far, far, far !
From city to city, abandoned of pity,
A ship without needle or star.
Homeless she passed, like a cloud on the blast,
Seeking peace, finding war.
She is here in her car,
From afar and afar—
Hum ! hum !

I have stung her and wrung her !
The venom is working ;—
And, if you had hung her
With canting and quirking,
She could not be deader than she will be soon ;
I have driven her close to you under the moon.
Night and day, hum ! hum ! ha !
I have hummed her and drummed her
From place to place, till at last I have dumbbed her.
Hum ! hum ! hum !

LEECH.

I will suck
Blood or muck.
The disease of the state is a plethory ;
Who so fit to reduce it as I ?

RAT.

I'll slily seize and

Let blood from her weasand,—

Creeping through crevice and chink and cranny,

With my snaky tail and my sides so scranny.

Pyrganax. Aroint ye ! Thou unprofitable worm ![*To the LEECH*And thou, dull beetle, get thee back to hell, [*To the GADFLY.*

To sting the ghosts of Babylonian kings,

And the ox-headed Io.

SWINE (*within*).

Ugh, ugh, ugh !

Hail ! Iona the divine !

We will be no longer Swine,

But bulls with horns and dewlaps.

RAT.

For

You know, my lord, the Minotaur—

Pyrganax (fiercely). Be silent ! get to hell, or I will call

The cat out of the kitchen !

[*Exit the RAT.*

Well, Lord Mammon,

This is a pretty business !

Mammon.

I will go

And spell some scheme to make it ugly then.

[*Exit.**Enter SWELLFOOT.**Swellfoot.* She is returned ! Taurina is in Thebes,

When Swellfoot wishes that she were in hell !

O Hymen, clothed in yellow jealousy,

And waving o'er the couch of wedded kings

The torch of Discord with its fiery hair,

This is thy work, thou patron saint of queens !

Swellfoot is wived ! Though parted by the sea,

The very name of wife had conjugal rights ;

Her cursed image ate, drank, slept, with me,

And in the arms of Adiposa oft

Her memory has received a husband's—

[*A loud tumult, and cries of* "Iona for ever !—No Swellfoot !"]

Hark

How the Swine cry "Iona Taurina !"]

I suffer the real presence. *Pyrganax,*

Off with her head !

Pyrganax. But I must first impanel
A jury of the Pigs.

Swellfoot. Pack them then.

Pyrganax. Or fattening some few in two separate sties,
And giving them clean straw, tying some bits
Of ribbon round their legs—giving their Sows
Some tawdry lace and bits of lustre-glass,
And their young Boars white and red rags, and tails
Of cows, and jay-feathers, and sticking cauliflowers
Between the ears of the old ones . . . And, when¹
They are persuaded that by the inherent virtue
Of these things they are all imperial Pigs,
Good Lord ! they'd rip each other's bellies up,—
Not to say, help us in destroying *her*.

Swellfoot. This plan might be tried too ;—where's General
Laoctonos ?²

Enter LAOCTONOS and DAKRY.

It is my royal pleasure
That you, Lord General, bring the head and body
(If separate, it would please me better) hither
Of Queen Iona.

Laoctonos. That pleasure I well knew ;
And made a charge with those battalions bold
Called, from their dress and grin, the Royal Apes,
Upon the Swine,—who in a hollow square
Enclosed her, and received the first attack
Like so many rhinoceroses, and then,
Retreating in good order, with bare tusks
And wrinkled snouts presented to the foe,
Bore her in triumph to the Public Sty.
What is still worse, some Sows upon the ground
Have given the Ape-guards apples, nuts, and gin,
And they all whisk their tails aloft, and cry,
“Long live Iona ! down with Swellfoot !”

Pyrganax. Hark !

The Swine (without). Long live Iona ! down with Swellfoot !

Dakry. I

Went to the garret of the Swineherd's Tower
Which overlooks the sty, and made a long
Harangue (all words) to the assembled Swine,
Of delicacy, mercy, judgment, law,
Morals, and precedents, and purity,

Adultery, destitution, and divorce,
Piety, faith, and state-necessity,
And how I loved the Queen !—And then I wept
With the pathos of my own eloquence ;
And every tear turned to a millstone, which
Brained many a gaping Pig, and there was made
A slough of blood and brains upon the place,
Greased with the pounded bacon. Round and round
The millstones rolled, ploughing the pavement up,
And hurling Sucking Pigs into the air,
With dust and stones.

Enter MAMMON.

Mammon. I wonder that grey wizards
Like you should be so beardless in their schemes ;
It had been but a point of policy
To keep Iona and the Swine apart.
Divide and rule. But ye have made a junction
Between two parties who will govern you,
But for my art.—Behold this Bag ! it is
The poison-bag of that Green Spider huge
On which our spies skulked in ovation through
The streets of Thebes when they were paved with dead.
A bane so much the deadlier fills it now
As calumny is worse than death,—for here
The Gadfly's venom, fifty times distilled,
Is mingled with the vomit of the Leech,
In due proportion, and black ratsbane which
That very Rat who like the Pontic tyrant
Nurtures himself on poison dare not touch.
All is sealed up with the broad seal of Fraud,
Who is the Devil's Lord High Chancellor ;
And over it the Primate of all Hell
Murmured this pious baptism :—"Be thou called
The Green Bag ; and this power and grace be thine—
That thy contents, on whomsoever poured,
Turn innocence to guilt, and gentlest looks
To savage, foul, and fierce deformity.
Let all baptized by thy infernal dew
Be called adulterer, drunkard, liar, wretch !
No name left out which orthodoxy loves,
Court Journal or legitimate Review !
Be they called tyrant, beast, fool, glutton, lover

Of other wives and husbands than their own—
 The heaviest sin on this side of the Alps !
 Wither they to a ghastly caricature
 Of what was human ! let not man or beast
 Behold their face with unaverted eyes,
 Or hear their names with ears that tingle not
 With blood of indignation, rage, and shame !”
 This is a perilous liquor, good my lords.

[SWELLFOOT *approaches to touch the GREEN BAG.*
 Beware ! for God's sake, beware !—if you should break
 The seal, and touch the fatal liquor——

Pyrganax.

There !

Give it to me : I have been used to handle
 All sorts of poisons. His dread Majesty
 Only desires to see the colour of it.

Mammon. Now, with a little common sense, my lords,
 Only undoing all that has been done
 (Yet so as it may seem we but confirm it),
 Our victory is assured. We must entice
 Her Majesty from the Sty ; and make the Pigs
 Believe that the contents of the Green Bag
 Are the true test of guilt or innocence ;
 And that, if she be guilty, 'twill transform her
 To manifest deformity like guilt,—
 If innocent, she will become transfigured
 Into an angel, such as they say she is,
 And they will see her flying through the air,
 So bright that she will dim the noonday sun,
 Showering-down blessings in the shape of comfits.
 This, trust a priest, is just the sort of thing
 Swine will believe. I'll wager you will see them
 Climbing upon the thatch of their low sties,
 With pieces of smoked glass, to watch her sail
 Among the clouds ; and some will hold the flaps
 Of one another's ears between their teeth,
 To catch the coming hail of comfits in.
 You, Pyrganax, who have the gift o' the gab,
 Make them a solemn speech to this effect :
 I go to put in readiness the feast
 Kept to the honour of our goddess Famine,
 Where, for more glory, let the ceremony
 Take place of the uglification of the Queen.

Dakry (to Swellfoot). I, as the keeper of your sacred
conscience,
Humbly remind your Majesty that the care
Of your high office, as man-milliner
To red Bellona, should not be deferred.

Pyrganax. All part, in happier plight to meet again !

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Public Sty. The Boars in full Assembly.**Enter PYRGANAX.*

Pyrganax. Grant me your patience, Gentlemen and Boars,
 Ye by whose patience under public burdens
 The glorious constitution of these sties
 Subsists, and shall subsist. The Lean-pig rates
 Grow with the growing populace of Swine;
 The taxes, that true source of piggishness
 (How can I find a more appropriate term
 To include religion, morals, peace, and plenty,
 And all that fit Bœotia as a nation
 To teach the other nations how to live?)
 Increase with piggishness itself; and still
 Does the revenue, that great spring of all
 The patronage and pensions and by-payments
 Which freeborn pigs regard with jealous eyes,
 Diminish; till at length, by glorious steps,
 All the land's produce will be merged in taxes,
 And the revenue will amount to——nothing!
 The failure of a foreign market for
 Sausages, bristles, and blood-puddings,
 And such home-manufactures, is but partial;
 And that the population of the Pigs,
 Instead of hog-wash, has been fed on straw
 And water, is a fact which is—you know—
 That is—it is a state-necessity—
 Temporary, of course. Those impious Pigs
 Who by their frequent squeaks have dared impugn^r
 The settled Swellfoot system, or to make
 Irreverent mockery of the genuflexions
 Inculcated by the Arch-priest, have been whipped
 Into a loyal and an orthodox whine.
 Things being in this happy state, the Queen
 Iona——

A loud cry from the Pigs. She is innocent! most innocent!

Pyrganax. That is the very thing that I was saying,
 Gentlemen Swine. The Queen Iona, being
 Most innocent, no doubt, returns to Thebes,
 And the lean Sows and Boars collect about her

Wishing to make her think that *we* believe
 (I mean those more substantial Pigs who swill
 Rich hog-wash while the others mouth damp straw)
 That she is guilty. Thus the Lean-pig faction
 Seeks to obtain that hog-wash which has been
 Your immemorial right, and which I will
 Maintain you in to the last drop of—

A Boar (interrupting him). What
 Does any one accuse her of?

Pyrganax. Why, no one
 Makes *any* positive accusation. But
 There were hints dropped ; and so the privy wizards
 Conceived that it became them to advise
 His Majesty to investigate their truth.
 Not for his own sake ; he could be content
 To let his wife play any pranks she pleased,
 If by that sufferance he could please the Pigs ;
 But then he fears the morals of the Swine,
 The Sows especially, and what effect
 It might produce upon the purity and
 Religion of the rising generation
 Of Sucking Pigs, if it could be suspected
 That Queen Iona——

[*A pause*

First Boar. Well, go on ; we long
 To hear what she can possibly have done.

Pyrganax. Why, it is hinted that a certain Bull——
 Thus much is *known* :—The milk-white Bulls that feed
 Beside Clitumnus and the crystal lakes
 Of the Cisalpine mountains, in fresh dews
 Of lotus-grass and blossoming asphodel
 Sleeking their silken hair, and with sweet breath
 Loading the morning winds until they faint
 With living fragrance, are so beautiful !——
 Well, *I* say nothing ;—but Europa rode
 On such a one from Asia into Crete,
 And the enamoured sea grew calm beneath
 His gliding beauty ; and Pasiphae,
 Iona's grandmother,——but *she* is innocent !
 And that both you and I and all assert.

First Boar. Most innocent !

Pyrganax. Behold this Bag ; a bag——

Second Boar. Oh, no Green Bags ! Jealousy's eyes are green,

Scorpions are green, and water-snakes and efts,
And verdigris, and——

Pyrganax. Honourable Swine,
In piggish souls can prepossessions reign?
Allow me to remind you, grass is green—
All flesh is grass—no bacon but is flesh—
Ye are but bacon. This divining Bag
(Which is not green, but only bacon-colour)
Is filled with liquor which, if sprinkled o'er
A woman guilty of—we all know what—
Makes her so hideous, till she finds one blind,
She never can commit the like again.
If innocent, she will turn into an angel,
And rain-down blessings in the shape of comfits
As she flies up to heaven. Now, my proposal
Is to convert her sacred Majesty
Into an angel (as I am sure we shall do)
By pouring on her head this mystic water. [*Showing the Bag.*
I know that she is innocent; I wish
Only to prove her so to all the world.

First Boar. Excellent, just, and noble *Pyrganax*!

Second Boar. How glorious it will be to see her Majesty
Flying above our heads, her petticoats
Streaming like—like—like—

Third Boar. Anything.

Pyrganax. Oh no!

But like a standard of an admiral's ship,
Or like the banner of a conquering host,
Or like a cloud dyed in the dying day,
Unravell'd on the blast from a white mountain;
Or like a meteor, or a war-steed's mane,
Or waterfall from a dizzy precipice
Scattered upon the wind.

First Boar. Or a cow's tail,—

Second Boar. Or anything, as the learned Boar observed.

Pyrganax. Gentlemen Boars, I move a resolution—
That her most sacred Majesty should be
Invited to attend the feast of Famine,
And to receive upon her chaste white body
Dews of apotheosis from this Bag.

[*A great confusion is heard of the Pigs out of Doors, which communicates itself to those within. During the first*

Strophe, the doors of the Sty are staved in, and a number of exceedingly lean Pigs and Sows and Boars rush in.

SEMICHORUS I.

No! Yes!

SEMICHORUS II.

Yes! No!

SEMICHORUS I.

A law!

SEMICHORUS II.

A flaw!

SEMICHORUS I.

Porkers, we shall lose our wash,
Or must share it with the Lean Pigs!

FIRST BOAR.

Order! order! be not rash!
Was there ever such a scene, Pigs!

AN OLD SOW (*rushing in*).

I never saw so fine a dash
Since I first began to wean Pigs.

SECOND BOAR (*solemnly*).

The Queen will be an angel time enough.
I vote, in form of an amendment, that
Pyrganax rub a little of that stuff
Upon his face—

Pyrganax. [*His heart is seen to beat through his waistcoat*
Gods! What would ye be at?

SEMICHORUS I.

Pyrganax has plainly shown a
Cloven foot and jackdaw feather.

SEMICHORUS II.

I vote Swellfoot and Iona
Try the magic test together;
Whenever royal spouses bicker,
Both should try the magic liquor.

AN OLD BOAR (*aside*).

A miserable state is that of Pigs;
For, if their drivers would tear caps and wigs,
The Swine must bite each other's ear therefore.

AN OLD SOW (*aside*).

A wretched lot Jove has assigned to Swine ;
Squabbling makes Pig-herds hungry, and they dine
On bacon, and whip Sucking Pigs the more.

CHORUS.

Hog-wash has been ta'en away :
If the Bull-Queen is divested,
We shall be in every way
Hunted, stripped, exposed, molested ;
Let us do whate'er we may
That she shall not be arrested.
Queen, we entrench you with walls of brawn,
And palisades of tusks sharp as a bayonet.
Place your most sacred person here : we pawn
Our lives that none a finger dare to lay on it.
Those who wrong you wrong us ;
Those who hate you hate us ;
Those who sting you sting us ;
Those who bait you bait us.

The oracle is now about to be
Fulfilled by circumvolving destiny—
Which says : " Thebes, choose reform or civil war,
When through your streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A Consort-Queen shall hunt a King with Hogs,
Riding upon the Ionian Minotaur."

Enter IONA TAURINA.

Iona Taurina (coming forward). Gentlemen Swine and
gentle Lady Pigs,

The tender heart of every Boar acquits
Their Queen of any act incongruous
With native piggishness ; and she, reposing
With confidence upon the grunting nation,
Has thrown herself, her cause, her life, her all,
Her innocence, into their hoggish arms ;
Nor has the expectation been deceived
Of finding shelter there. Yet know, great Boars
(For such whoever lives among you finds you,
And so do I), the innocent are proud.
I have accepted your protection only
In compliment of your kind love and care,
Not for necessity. The innocent
Are safest there where trials and dangers wait ;

Innocent queens o'er white-hot ploughshares tread,
 Unsinged ; and ladies (Erin's laureate sings it)
 Decked with rare gems and beauty rarer still
 Walked from Killarney to the Giant's Causeway,
 Through rebels, smugglers, troops of yeomanry,
 White-boys and Orange-boys and constables,
 Tithe-proctors and excise people, uninjured !
 Thus I !—

Lord Pyrganax, I do commit myself
 Into your custody, and am prepared
 To stand the test, whatever it may be.

Pyrganax. This magnanimity in your sacred Majesty
 Must please the Pigs. You cannot fail of being
 A heavenly angel.—Smoke your bits of glass,
 Ye loyal Swine, or her transfiguration
 Will blind your wondering eyes.

An Old Boar (aside). Take care, my lord,
 They do not smoke you first.

Pyrganax. At the approaching feast
 Of Famine, let the expiation be.

Swine. Content ! content !

Iona Taurina (aside). I, most content of all,
 Know that my foes even thus prepare their fall !

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

SCENE II.—*The interior of the Temple of FAMINE. The statue of the Goddess, a skeleton clothed in party-coloured rags, seated upon a heap of skulls and loaves intermingled. A number of exceedingly fat Priests in black garments arrayed on each side, with marrow-bones and cleavers in their hands. A flourish of trumpets.*

Enter MAMMON as Arch-priest, SWELLFOOT, DAKRY, PYRGANAX, LAOCTONOS, followed by IONA TAURINA guarded. On the other side enter the Swine.

CHORUS OF PRIESTS,

Accompanied by the Court-Porkman, on marrow-bones and cleavers.

Goddess bare and gaunt and pale,
 Empress of the World, all hail !
 What though Cretans old called thee
 City-crested Cybele ?
 We call thee Famine !—

Goddess of fasts and feasts, starving and cramming !
 Through thee, for emperors, kings, and priests, and lords,
 Who rule by viziers, sceptres, bank-notes, words,
 The earth pours forth its plenteous fruits,
 Corn, wool, linen, flesh, and roots.
 Those who consume these fruits through thee grow fat ;
 Those who produce these fruits through thee grow lean :
 Whatever change takes place, oh stick to that !
 And let things be as they have ever been ;
 At least while we remain thy priests,
 And proclaim thy fasts and feasts !
 Through thee the sacred Swellfoot dynasty
 Is based upon a rock amid that sea
 Whose waves are Swine—So let it ever be !

[SWELLFOOT, &c., seat themselves at a table magnificently
 covered at the upper end of the Temple. Attendants pass
 over the stage with hog-wash in pails. A number of Pigs,
 exceedingly lean, follow them licking up the wash.

Mammon. I fear your sacred Majesty has lost
 The appetite which you were used to have.
 Allow me now to recommend this dish—
 A simple kickshaw by your Persian cook,
 Such as is served at the Great King's second table.
 The price and pains which its ingredients cost
 Might have maintained some dozen families
 A winter or two—not more. So plain a dish
 Could scarcely disagree.

Swellfoot. After the trial,
 And these fastidious Pigs are gone, perhaps
 I may recover my lost appetite.
 I feel the gout flying about my stomach.
 Give me a glass of maraschino punch.

Pyrganax (*filling his glass and standing up*). The glorious
 Constitution of the Pigs.

All. A toast ! a toast ! Stand up, and three times three !

Dakry. No heeltaps—darken daylight !

Laotonos. Claret somehow
 Puts me in mind of blood, and blood of claret.
 Swellfoot. Laotonos is fishing for a compliment,—
 But 'tis his due. Yes, you have drunk more wine
 And shed more blood than any man in Thebes.

[To PYRGANAX.

For God's sake stop the grunting of those Pigs.

Pyrganax. We dare not, sire ! 'tis famine's privilege.

CHORUS OF SWINE.

Hail to thee, hail to thee, Famine !

Thy throne is on blood, and thy robe is of rags,

Thou devil which livest on damning !

Saint of new churches, and cant, and Green Bags !

Till in pity and terror thou risest,

Confounding the schemes of the wisest.

When thou liftest thy skeleton form,

When the loaves and the skulls roll about,

We will greet thee—the voice of a storm

Would be lost in our terrible shout !

Then hail to thee, hail to thee, Famine !

Hail to thee, Empress of Earth !

When thou risest, dividing possessions,

When thou risest, uprooting oppressions,

In the pride of thy ghastly mirth,—

Over palaces, temples, and graves,

We will rush as thy minister slaves,

Trampling behind in thy train,

Till all be made level again !

Mammon. I hear a crackling of the giant bones

Of the dread image, and in the black pits

Which once were eyes I see two livid flames :

These prodigies are oracular, and show

The presence of the unseen Deity.

Mighty events are hastening to their doom !

Swellfoot. I only hear the lean and mutinous Swine

Grunting about the temple.

Dakry. In a crisis

Of such exceeding delicacy, I think

We ought to put her Majesty the Queen

Upon her trial without delay.

Mammon. The Bag

Is here.

Pyrganax. I have rehearsed the entire scene,

With an ox-bladder and some ditch-water,

On Lady P.—it cannot fail.

[*Taking up the bag.*

Your Majesty (*to SWELLFOOT*)

In such a filthy business had better
 Stand on one side, lest it should sprinkle you.
 A spot or two on me would do no harm ;
 Nay, it might hide the blood which the sad Genius
 Of the Green Isle has fixed, as by a spell,
 Upon my brow—which would stain all its seas,
 But which those seas could never wash away.

Iona Taurina. My lord, I am ready—nay I am impatient—
 To undergo the test.

[A graceful figure in a semi-transparent veil passes unnoticed through the Temple; the word LIBERTY is seen through the veil, as if it were written in fire upon its forehead. Its words are almost drowned in the furious grunting of the Pigs, and the business of the trial. She kneels on the steps of the Altar, and speaks in tones at first faint and low, but which ever become louder and louder.]

Mighty Empress ! Death's white wife !
 Ghastly mother-in-law of Life !
 By the God who made thee such,
 By the magic of thy touch,
 By the starving and the cramming
 Of fasts and feasts !—by thy dread self, O Famine !
 I charge thee, when thou wake the multitude,
 Thou lead them not upon the paths of blood !
 The earth did never mean her foison
 For those who crown life's cup with poison
 Of fanatic rage and meaningless revenge—
 But for those radiant spirits who are still
 The standard-bearers in the van of Change.
 Be they the appointed stewards to fill
 The lap of pain, and toil, and age !—
 Remit, O Queen, thy accustomed rage !
 Be what thou art not ! In voice faint and low
 Freedom calls Famine, her eternal foe,
 To brief alliance, hollow truce.—Rise now !

[While the Veiled Figure has been chaunting this strophe, MAMMON, DAKRY, LAOCTONOS, and SWELLFOOT, have surrounded IONA TAURINA, who, with her hands folded on her breast, and her eyes lifted to heaven, stands, as with saint-like resignation, to wait the issue of the business, in perfect confidence of her innocence.]

[PYRGANAX, after unsealing the GREEN BAG, is gravely about to pour the liquor upon her head, when suddenly the whole expression of her figure and countenance changes; she snatches it from his hand with a loud laugh of triumph, and empties it over SWELLFOOT and his whole Court, who are instantly changed into a number of filthy and ugly animals, and rush out of the Temple. The image of FAMINE then arises with a tremendous sound, the Pigs begin scrambling for the loaves, and are tripped up by the skulls; all those who eat the loaves are turned into Bulls, and arrange themselves quietly behind the altar. The image of FAMINE sinks through a chasm in the earth, and a MINOTAUR rises.

Minotaur. I am the Ionian Minotaur, the mightiest
Of all Europa's taurine progeny—
I am the old traditional Man-Bull,
And, from my ancestors' having been Ionian,
I am called Ion, which by interpretation
Is John; in plain Theban, that is to say—
My name's John Bull. I am a famous hunter,
And can leap any gate in all Bœotia,—
Even the palings of the royal park,
Or double ditch about the new enclosures;
And, if your Majesty will deign to mount me,
At least till you have hunted-down your game
I will not throw you.

Iona Taurina.

[During this speech she has been putting-on boots and spurs, and a hunting-cap buckishly cocked on one side, and, tucking up her hair, she leaps nimbly on his back.

Hoa! hoa! tallyho! tallyho! ho! ho!
Come, let us hunt these ugly badgers down,
These stinking foxes, these devouring otters,
These hares, these wolves, these anything but men!
Hey for a whipper-in! My loyal Pigs,
Now let your noses be as keen as beagles',
Your steps as swift as greyhounds', and your cries
More dulcet and symphonious than the bells
Of village-towers on sunshine holiday!
Wake all the dewy woods with jangling music!
Give them no law (are they not beasts of blood?)
But such as they gave you. Tallyho! ho!

Through forest, furze, and bog and den and desert,
Pursue the ugly beasts ! Tallyho ! ho !

FULL CHORUS OF IONA AND THE SWINE.

Tallyho ! tallyho !

Through rain, hail, and snow,
Through brake, gorse, and briar,
Through fen, flood, and mire,
We go ! we go !

Tallyho ! tallyho !

Through pond, ditch, and slough,
Wind them and find them,
Like the devil behind them !
Tallyho ! tallyho !

[*Exeunt, in full cry ; IONA driving-on the SWINE with
the empty GREEN-BAG.*]

SHELLEY'S NOTES TO CÆDIPUS TYRANNUS.

P. 277.

Nor with less toil were their foundations laid.

See *Universal History* for an account of the number of people who died, and the immense consumption of garlic by the wretched Egyptians who made a sepulchre for the name as well as the bodies of their tyrants.

P. 281.

*The Gadfly was the same which Juno sent
To agitate Io.*

The *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus.

P. 281.

*And which Ezekiel mentions
That the Lord whistled-for out of the mountains.*

"And the Lord whistled for the gadfly out of Ethiopia, and for the bee out of Egypt," &c.—*Ezekiel*.

P. 283.

And married her to the Gallows.

"Unless a man would marry a gallows, and beget young gibbets, I never saw one so prone."—*Cymbeline*.

P. 294.

Erin's laureate sings it.

"Rich and rare were the gems she wore."

See MOORE'S *Irish Melodies*.

NOTE ON ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

IN the brief journal I kept in those days, I find recorded, in August 1820, Shelley "begins *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, suggested by the pigs at the fair of San Giuliano." This was the period of Queen Caroline's landing in England, and the struggles made by George IV. to get rid of her claims; which failing, Lord Castlereagh placed the "*Green Bag*" on the table of the House of Commons, demanding in the King's name that an enquiry should be instituted into his wife's conduct. These circumstances were the theme of all conversation among the English. We were then at the Baths of San Giuliano. A friend came to visit us on the day when a fair was held in the square beneath our windows: Shelley read to us his *Ode to Liberty*; and was riotously accompanied by the grunting of a quantity of pigs brought for sale to the fair. He compared it to the "chorus of frogs" in the satiric drama of Aristophanes; and, it being an hour of merriment, and one ludicrous association suggesting another, he imagined a political-satirical drama on the circumstances of the day, to which the pigs would serve as chorus—and *Swellfoot* was begun. When finished, it was transmitted to England, printed, and published anonymously; but stifled at the very dawn of its existence by the Society for the Suppression of Vice, who threatened to prosecute it, if not immediately withdrawn. The friend who had taken the trouble of bringing it out, of course, did not think it worth the annoyance and expense of a contest, and it was laid aside.

Hesitation of whether it would do honour to Shelley prevented my publishing it at first. But I cannot bring myself to keep back anything he ever wrote; for each word is fraught with the peculiar views and sentiments which he believed to be beneficial to the human race, and the bright light of poetry irradiates every thought. The world has a right to the entire compositions of such a man; for it does not live and thrive by the outworn lesson of the dullard or the hypocrite, but by the original free thoughts of men of genius, who aspire to pluck bright Truth

"from the pale-faced moon;
Or dive into the bottom of the deep
Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned"

Truth. Even those who may dissent from his opinions will consider that he was a man of genius, and that the world will take more interest in his slightest word than from the waters of Lethe which are so eagerly prescribed as medicinal for all its wrongs and woes. This drama, however, must not be judged for more than was meant. It is a mere plaything of the imagination; which even may not excite smiles among many, who will not see wit in those combinations of thought which were full of the ridiculous to the author. But, like everything he wrote, it breathes that deep sympathy for the sorrows of humanity, and indignation against its oppressors, which make it worthy of his name.

THE SENSITIVE PLANT.

PART I.

I.

A SENSITIVE PLANT in a garden grew ;
And the young winds fed it with silver dew ;
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,
And closed them beneath the kisses of Night.

II.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere ;
And each flower and herb on earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

III.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

IV.

The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet ;
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

V.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess
Till they die of their own dear loveliness ;

VI.

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair, and passion so pale,
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green ;

VII.

And the hyacinth, purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense ;

VIII.

And the rose, like a nymph to the bath addressed,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare ;

IX.

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Mænad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star which is its eye
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky ;

X.

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose—
The sweetest flower for scent that blows—
And all rare blossoms from every clime,
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

XI.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was pranked under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

XII.

Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by ;
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

XIII.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

XIV.

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flowrets which, drooping as day drooped too,
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

XV.

And from this undefiled paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet
Can first lull and at last must awaken it),

XVI.

When heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Shone smiling to heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun ;—

XVII.

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear,
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

XVIII.

But the Sensitive Plant, which could give small fruit
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,
Received more than all ; it loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver :—

XIX.

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower ;
Radiance and odour are not its dower ;
It loves even like Love,—its deep heart is full ;
It desires what it has not, the beautiful.

XX.

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmurings ;
The beams which dart from many a star
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar ;

XXI.

The plumed insects swift and free—
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour—which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass ;

XXII.

The unseen clouds of the dew which lie
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears ;

XXIII.

The quivering vapours of dim noontide,
Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,
In which every sound and odour and beam
Move as reeds in a single stream ;—

XXIV.

Each and all like ministering angels were
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear,
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by,
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

XXV.

And, when evening descended from heaven above,
And the earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
And delight, though less bright, was far more deep,
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep,—

XXVI.

And the beasts and the birds and the insects were drowned
In an ocean of dreams without a sound,
Whose waves never mark though they ever impress
The light sand which paves it, consciousness ;—

XXVII.

(Only overhead the sweet nightingale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,
And snatches of its elysian chant
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant) ;—

XXVIII.

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest
Upgathered into the bosom of rest ;
A sweet child weary of its delight,
The feeblest and yet the favourite,
Cradled within the embrace of Night.

PART II.

I.

THERE was a power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden ; a ruling Grace
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

II.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind,
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a seaflower unfolded beneath the ocean,

III.

Tended the garden from morn to even :
And the meteors of that sublunar heaven,
Like the lamps of the air when Night walks forth,
Laughed round her footsteps up from the earth.

IV.

She had no companion of mortal race ;
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face
Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her eyes,
That her dreams were less slumber than paradise :

V.

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Though the veil of daylight concealed him from her.

VI.

Her step seemed to pity the grass it pressed :
You might hear, by the heaving of her breast,
That the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there, and left passion behind.

VII.

And, wherever her airy footstep trod,
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
Erased its light vestige with shadowy sweep,
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark-green deep.

VIII.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet ;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers through all their frame.

IX.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint with the sunny beam ;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder-showers.

X.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and osier-bands ;
If the flowers had been her own infants, she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

XI.

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore in a basket of Indian woof
Into the rough woods far aloof ;—

XII.

In a basket of grasses and wildflowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

XIII.

But the bee, and the beamlike ephemeris
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

XIV.

And many an antenatal tomb
Where butterflies dream of the life to come
She left clinging round the smooth and dark
Edge of the odorous cedar-bark.

XV.

This fairest Creature from earliest Spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering
All the sweet season of summertime :
And, ere the first leaf looked brown, she died.

PART III.

I.

THREE days the flowers of the garden fair
Like stars when the moon is awakened were,
Or the waves of Baïæ ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.

II.

And on the fourth the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral-chant ;
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow ;
And the sobs of the mourners, deep and low ;

III.

The weary sound and the heavy breath ;
And the silent motions of passing death ;
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin-plank.

IV.

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass,
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass ;
From their sighs the Wind caught a mournful tone,
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

V.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul :
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap
To make men tremble who never weep.

VI.

Swift summer into the autumn flowed ;
And frost in the mist of the morning rode,
Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright,
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

VII.

The rose-leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Paved the turf and the moss below :
The lilies were drooping and white and wan,
Like the head and the skin of a dying man ;

VIII.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,
Leaf after leaf, day after day,
Were massed into the common clay.

IX.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and grey, and red,
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind passed :
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

X.

And the gusty winds waked the wingèd seeds
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem,
Which rotted into the earth with them.

XI.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set ;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air.

XII.

Then the rain came down ; and the broken stalks
Were bent and tangled across the walks ;
And the leafless network of parasite bowers
Massed into ruin, and all sweet flowers.

XIII.

Between the time of the wind and the snow,
All loathliest weeds began to grow,
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

XIV.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

XV.

And plants at whose names the verse feels loth
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly and pulpous and blistering and blue,
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

XVI.

And agarics and fungi, with mildew and mould,
Started like mist from the wet ground cold ;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated.

XVII.

Their moss rotted off them flake by flake,
Till the thick stalk stuck like a murderer's stake,
Where rags of loose flesh yet tremble on high,
Infecting the winds that wander by.

XVIII.

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water-snakes.

XIX.

And hour by hour, when the air was still,
The vapours arose which have strength to kill :
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

XX.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray
Crept and flitted in broad noonday
Unseen ; every branch on which they alit
By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

XXI.

The Sensitive Plant, like one forbid,
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves, which together grew
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

XXII.

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn ;
The sap shrank to the root through every pore,
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

XXIII.

For Winter came : the wind was his whip ;
One choppy finger was on his lip :
He had torn the cataracts from the hills,
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles.

XXIV.

His breath was a chain which without a sound
The earth and the air and the water bound ;
He came, fiercely driven in his chariot-throne
By the tenfold blasts of the Arctic zone.

XXV.

Then the weeds, which were forms of living death,
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath :
Their decay and sudden flight from frost
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost.

XXVI.

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want :
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air,
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

XXVII.

First there came down a thawing rain,
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again ;
Then there steamed up a freezing dew
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew ;

XXVIII.

And a northern Whirlwind, wandering about
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
Shook the boughs, thus laden and heavy and stiff,
And snapped them off with his rigid griff.

XXIX.

When Winter had gone, and Spring came back,
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck ;
But the mandrakes and toadstools and docks and darnels
Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.

CONCLUSION.

I.

WHETHER the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

II.

Whether that Lady's gentle mind,
No longer with the form combined
Which scattered love as stars do light,
Found sadness where it left delight,

III.

I dare not guess. But, in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream,

IV.

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

V.

That garden sweet, that Lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never passed away :
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed ; not they.

VI.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change ; their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

LETTER TO MARIA GISBORNE.

LEGHORN, *July 1, 1820.*

THE spider spreads her webs, whether she be
In poet's tower, cellar, or barn, or tree ;
The silkworm in the dark-green mulberry-leaves
His winding-sheet and cradle ever weaves :
So I, a thing whom moralists call worm,
Sit spinning still round this decaying form,
From the fine threads of rare and subtle thought—
No net of words in garish colours wrought
To catch the idle buzzers of the day—
But a soft cell where, when that fades away,
Memory may clothe in wings my living name,
And feed it with the asphodels of fame
Which in those hearts which must remember me
Grow, making love an immortality.

Whoever should behold me now, I wist,
Would think I were a mighty mechanist,
Bent with sublime Archimedean art
To breathe a soul into the iron heart
Of some machine portentous, or strange gin,
Which by the force of figured spells might win
Its way over the sea, and sport therein ;—
For round the walls are hung dread engines, such
As Vulcan never wrought for Jove to clutch
Ixion or the Titan ; or the quick
Wit of that man of God, Saint Dominic,
To convince atheist, Turk, or heretic ;
Or those in philanthropic council met
Who thought to pay some interest for the debt
They owed to Jesus Christ for their salvation
By giving a faint foretaste of damnation
To Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, and the rest
Who made our land an island of the blest
(When lamp-like Spain, who now relumes her fire
On Freedom's hearth, grew dim with empire),

With thumbscrews, wheels with tooth and spike and jag,
Which fishers found under the utmost crag
Of Cornwall, and the storm-encompassed isles
Where to the sky the rude sea rarely smiles
Unless in treacherous wrath, as on the morn
When the exulting elements in scorn,
Satiated with destroyed destruction, lay
Sleeping in beauty on their mangled prey,
As panthers sleep. And other strange and dread
Magical forms the brick floor overspread,—
Proteus transformed to metal did not make
More figures, or more strange, nor did he take
Such shapes of unintelligible brass,
Or heap himself in such a horrid mass
Of tin and iron not to be understood,
And forms of unimaginable wood,
To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood :
Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and groovèd blocks,
The elements of what will stand the shocks
Of wave and wind and time.—Upon the table
More knacks and quips there be than I am able
To catalogize in this verse of mine.—
A pretty bowl of wood—not full of wine,
But quicksilver ; that dew which the gnomes drink
When at their subterranean toil they swink,
Pledging the demons of the earthquake, who
Reply to them in lava,—cry “ halloo ! ”—
And call out to the cities o’er their head.
Roofs, towers, and shrines, the dying and the dead,
Crash through the chinks of earth : and then all quaff
Another rouse, and hold their sides and laugh.
This quicksilver no gnome has drunk : within
The walnut bowl it lies, veinèd and thin,
In colour like the wake of light that stains
The Tuscan deep when from the moist moon rains.
The inmost shower of its white fire—the breeze
Is still—blue heaven smiles over the pale seas.
And in this bowl of quicksilver—for I
Yield to the impulse of an infancy
Outlasting manhood—I have made to float
A rude idealism of a paper boat.
A hollow screw with cogs : Henry will know

The thing I mean,—and laugh at me, if so
He fears not I should do more mischief.—Next
Lie bills and calculations much perplexed,
With steam-boats, frigates, and machinery quaint,
Traced over them in blue and yellow paint.
Then comes a range of mathematical
Instruments, for plans nautical and statical ;
A heap of rosin ; a queer broken glass
With ink in it ; a china cup that was
(What it will never be again, I think)
A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink
The liquor doctors rail at—and which I
Will quaff in spite of them ; and, when we die,
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,
And cry out “heads or tails !” where'er we be.
Near that, a dusty paint-box, some old hooks,
A half-burnt match, an ivory block, three books,
Where conic sections, spherics, logarithms,
To great Laplace from Saunderson and Sims,
Lie heaped in their harmonious disarray
Of figures,—disentangle them who may.
Baron de Tott's Memoirs beside them lie,
And some odd volumes of old chemistry.
Near those a most inexplicable thing
With lead in the middle—I'm conjecturing
How to make Henry understand ; but no !
I'll leave, as Spenser says “with many mo,”
This secret in the pregnant womb of Time,
Too vast a matter for so weak a rhyme.

And here like some weird Archimage sit I,
Plotting dark spells and devilish enginery,—
The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind,
Which pump-up oaths from clergymen, and grind
The gentle spirit of our meek Reviews
Into a powdery foam of salt abuse,
Ruffling the ocean of their self-content.
I sit, and smile or sigh as is my bent,
But not for them. Libeccio rushes round
With an inconstant and an idle sound ;
I heed him more than them. The thunder-smoke
Is gathering on the mountains, like a cloak

Folded athwart their shoulders broad and bare ;
The ripe corn under the undulating air
Undulates like an ocean ; and the vines
Are trembling wide in all their trellised lines ;
The murmur of the awakening sea doth fill
The empty pauses of the blast ; the hill
Looks hoary through the white electric rain ;
And from the glens beyond, in sullen strain,
The interrupted thunder howls ; above
One chasm of heaven smiles, like the eye of Love
On the unquiet world. While such things are,
How could one worth your friendship heed the war
Of worms,—the shriek of the world's carrion-jays,
Their censure or their wonder or their praise ?

You are not here ! The quaint witch Memory sees
In vacant chairs your absent images,
And points where once you sat, and now should be,
But are not.—I demand if ever we
Shall meet as then we met ;—and she replies,
Veiling in awe her second-sighted eyes,
“ I know the past alone : but summon home
My sister Hope—she speaks of all to come.”
But I, an old diviner who knew well
Every false verse of that sweet oracle,
Turned to the sad enchantress once again,
And sought a respite from my gentle pain
In citing every passage o'er and o'er
Of our communion :—How on the seashore
We watched the ocean and the sky together,
Under the roof of blue Italian weather ;
How I ran home through last year's thunderstorm,
And felt the transverse lightning linger warm
Upon my cheek ; and how we often made
Feasts for each other where goodwill outweighed
The frugal luxury of our country cheer
(As well it might, were it *less* firm and clear
Than ours must ever be). And how we spun
A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun
Of this familiar life, which seems to be
But is not,—or is but quaint mockery
Of all we would believe, and sadly blame

The jarring and inexplicable frame
Of this wrong world, and then anatomize
The purposes and thoughts of men whose eyes
Were closed in distant years ; or widely guess
The issue of the earth's great business,
When we shall be as we no longer are
(Like babbling gossips safe, who hear the war
Of winds, and sigh, but tremble not); or how
You listened to some interrupted flow
Of visionary rhyme, in joy and pain
Struck from the inmost fountains of my brain,
With little skill perhaps ; or how we sought
Those deepest wells of passion or of thought
Wrought by wise poets in the waste of years,
Staining their sacred waters with our tears,
Quenching a thirst ever to be renewed ;
Or how I, wisest lady ! then indued
The language of a land which now is free,
And, winged with thoughts of truth and majesty,
Flits round the tyrant's sceptre like a cloud,
And bursts the peopled prisons, and cries aloud
" My name is Legion !" —that majestic tongue
Which Calderon over the desert flung
Of ages and of nations, and which found
An echo in our hearts, and with the sound
Startled Oblivion. Thou wert then to me
As is a nurse when inarticulately
A child would talk as its grown parents do.
If living winds the rapid clouds pursue,
If hawks chase doves through the ethereal way,
Huntsmen the innocent deer, and beasts their prey,
Why should not we rouse with the spirit's blast
Out of the forest of the pathless past
These recollected pleasures ?

You are now

In London ; that great sea whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures ! You will see
That which was Godwin,—greater none than he ;
Though fallen, and fallen on evil times, to stand,
Among the spirits of our age and land,

Before the dread tribunal of To-come,
The foremost, while Rebuke cowers pale and dumb
You will see Coleridge ; he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.
You will see Hunt ; one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is—a tomb ;
Who is what others seem. His room no doubt
Is still adorned by many a cast from Shout ;
With graceful flowers tastefully placed about,
And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung,
The gifts of the most learn'd among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law and cousins.
And there is he with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door ;
Alas ! it is no use to say " I'm poor !"—
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever read in book,
Except in Shakespeare's wisest tenderness.
You will see Hogg ; and I cannot express
His virtues (though I know that they are great),
Because he locks, then barricades, the gate
Within which they inhabit. Of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oyster-shell,
One of the richest of the deep. And there
Is English Peacock with his mountain fair,—
Turned into a Flamingo, that shy bird
That gleams i' the Indian air. Have you not heard,
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him ? But you
Will see him, and will like him too, I hope,
With the milk-white Snowdonian antelope
Matched with this cameleopard. His fine wit
Makes such a wound the knife is lost in it ;

A strain too learned for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots ;—let his page,
Which charms the chosen spirits of the time,
Fold itself up for the serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation. Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge, all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in Horace Smith.—And these
(With some exceptions, which I need not tease
Your patience by descanting on) are all
You and I know in London.

I recall

My thoughts, and bid you look upon the night.
As water does a sponge, so the moonlight
Fills the void, hollow, universal air.
What see you ?—Unpavilioned heaven is fair ;
Whether the Moon, into her chamber gone,
Leaves midnight to the golden stars, or wan
Climbs with diminished beams the azure steep ;
Or whether clouds sail o'er the inverse deep,
Piloted by the many-wandering blast,
And the rare stars rush through them, dim and fast.
All this is beautiful in every land.
But what see *you* besides ? A shabby stand
Of hackney-coaches—a brick house or wall
Fencing some lonely court, white with the scrawl
Of our unhappy politics ;—or worse—
A wretched woman reeling by, whose curse,
Mixed with the watchman's, partner of her trade,
You must accept—in place of serenade,
Or yellow-haired Pollonia murmuring
To Henry some unutterable thing.

I see a chaos of green leaves and fruit
Built round dark caverns, even to the root
Of the living stems that feed them, in whose bowers
There sleep in their dark dew the folded flowers.
Beyond, the surface of the unsickled corn

Trembles not in the slumbering air ; and, borne
 In circles quaint and ever-changing dance,
 Like wingèd stars the fireflies flash and glance,
 Pale in the open moonshine, but each one
 Under the dark trees seems a little sun,
 A meteor tamed, a fixed star gone astray
 From the silver regions of the milky way.
 Afar the contadino's song is heard,
 Rude but made sweet by distance, and a bird
 Which cannot be the nightingale, and yet
 I know none else that sings so sweet as it
 At this late hour :—and then all is still.
 Now, Italy or London, which you will !

Next winter you must pass with me. I'll have
 My house by that time turned into a grave
 Of dead despondence and low-thoughted care,
 And all the dreams which our tormentors are.
 Oh that Hunt, Hogg, Peacock, and Smith, were there,
 With everything belonging to them fair !
 We will have books, Spanish, Italian, Greek ;
 And ask one week to make another week
 As like his father as I'm unlike mine,—
 Which is not *his* fault, as you may divine.
 Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine,
 Yet let's be merry. We'll have tea and toast ;
 Custards for supper ; and an endless host
 Of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies,
 And other such lady-like luxuries,—
 Feasting on which we will philosophize.
 And we'll have fires out of the Grand-Duke's wood,
 To thaw the six weeks' winter in our blood.
 And then we'll talk ;—what shall we talk about ?
 Oh there are themes enough for many a bout
 Of thought-entangled descant ! As to nerves—
 With cones and parallelograms and curves
 I've sworn to strangle them if once they dare
 To bother me when you are with me there ;
 And they shall never more sip laudanum
 From Helicon or Himeros.¹ Well, come,

¹ *Ἥμερος*, from which the river Himera was named, is, with some slight shade of difference, a synonym of Love.—*Shelley's Note*.

And in despite of God and of the devil
We'll make our friendly philosophic revel
Outlast the leafless time ; till buds and flowers
Warn the obscure inevitable hours
Sweet meeting by sad parting to renew :—
" Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

THE WITCH OF ATLAS.

TO MARY

(ON HER OBJECTING TO THE FOLLOWING POEM, UPON THE SCORE OF ITS
CONTAINING NO HUMAN INTEREST).

I.

How, my dear Mary? are you critic-bitten
(For vipers kill, though dead) by some review,—
That you condemn these verses I have written,
Because they tell no story, false or true?
What though no mice are caught by a young kitten?
May it not leap and play as grown cats do,
Till its claws come? Prithee, for this one time,
Content thee with a visionary rhyme.

II.

What hand would crush the silken-wingèd fly,
The youngest of inconstant April's minions,
Because it cannot climb the purest sky,
Where the swan sings amid the sun's dominions?
Not thine. Thou knowest 'tis its doom to die
When Day shall hide within her twilight pinions
The lucent eyes and the eternal smile,
Serene as thine, which lent it life awhile.

III.

To thy fair feet a wingèd Vision came
Whose date should have been longer than a day,
And o'er thy head did beat its wings for fame,
And in thy sight its fading plumes display;
The watery bow burned in the evening flame;
But the shower fell, the swift Sun went his way—
And that is dead. Oh let me not believe
That anything of mine is fit to live!

IV.

Wordsworth informs us he was nineteen years
Considering and retouching Peter Bell ;
Watering his laurels with the killing tears
Of slow dull care, so that their roots to hell
Might pierce, and their wide branches blot the spheres
Of heaven with dewy leaves and flowers ; this well
May be, for heaven and earth conspire to foil
The over-busy gardener's blundering toil.

V.

My Witch indeed is not so sweet a creature
As Ruth or Lucy, whom his graceful praise
Clothes for our grandsons—but she matches Peter,
Though he took nineteen years, and she three days,
In dressing. Light the vest of flowing metre
She wears : he, proud as dandy with his stays,
Has hung upon his wiry limbs a dress
Like King Lear's looped and windowed raggedness.

VI.

If you strip Peter, you will see a fellow
Scorched by hell's hyperequatorial climate
Into a kind of a sulphureous yellow ;
A lean mark, hardly fit to fling a rhyme at ;
In shape a Scaramouch, in hue Othello.
If you unveil my Witch, no priest nor primate
Can shrive you of that sin,—if sin there be
In love when it becomes idolatry.

THE WITCH OF ATLAS.

I.

BEFORE those cruel twins whom at one birth
Incestuous Change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, had hunted from the earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
And left us nothing to believe in, worth
The pains of putting into learned rhyme,
A Lady Witch there lived on Atlas mountain
Within a cavern by a secret fountain.

II.

Her mother was one of the Atlantides.
The all-beholding Sun had ne'er beholden
In his wide voyage o'er continents and seas
So fair a creature, as she lay enfolden
In the warm shadow of her loveliness ;
He kissed her with his beams, and made all golden
The chamber of grey rock in which she lay.
She, in that dream of joy, dissolved away.

III.

'Tis said she first was changed into a vapour ;
And then into a cloud,—such clouds as flit
(Like splendour-wingèd moths about a taper)
Round the red west when the Sun dies in it ;
And then into a meteor, such as caper
On hill-tops when the Moon is in a fit ;
Then into one of those mysterious stars
Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars.

IV.

Ten times the Mother of the Months had bent
Her bow beside the folding-star, and bidden
With that bright sign the billows to indent
The sea-deserted sand—(like children chidden,
At her command they ever came and went)—
Since in that cave a dewy splendour hidden
Took shape and motion. With the living form
Of this embodied Power the cave grew warm.

V.

A lovely Lady garmented in light
From her own beauty : deep her eyes as are
Two openings of unfathomable night
Seen through a temple's cloven roof ; her hair
Dark ; the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
Picturing her form. Her soft smiles shone afar ;
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new.

VI.

And first the spotted cameleopard came ;
And then the wise and fearless elephant ;
Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
Of his own volumes interolved. All gaunt
And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame,—
They drank before her at her sacred fount ;
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,
Such gentleness and power even to behold.

VII.

The brinded lioness led forth her young,
That she might teach them how they should forego
Their inborn thirst of death ; the pard unstrung
His sinews at her feet, and sought to know,
With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue,
How he might be as gentle as the doe.
The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise.

VIII.

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
Of lilies, and the Wood-gods in a crew,
Came blithe as in the olive-copses thick
Cicadae are, drunk with the noonday dew ;
And Dryope and Faunus followed quick,
Teazing the God to sing them something new ;
Till in this cave they found the Lady lone,
Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

IX.

And universal Pan, 'tis said, was there.

And, though none saw him,—through the adamant
Of the deep mountains, through the trackless air,

And through those living spirits like a want,—
He passed out of his everlasting lair

Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant,
And felt that wondrous Lady all alone,—
And she felt him upon her emerald throne.

X.

And every Nymph of stream and spreading tree,
And every Shepherdess of Ocean's flocks

Who drives her white waves over the green sea,
And Ocean with the brine on his grey locks,
And quaint Priapus with his company,—

All came, much wondering how the enwombèd rocks
Could have brought forth so beautiful a birth :
Her love subdued their wonder and their mirth.

XI.

The herdsmen and the mountain-maidens came,
And the rude kings of pastoral Garamant—

Their spirits shook within them, as a flame
Stirred by the air under a cavern gaunt :

Pygmies and Polyphemes, by many a name,
Centaurs and Satyrs, and such shapes as haunt
Wet clefts,—and lumps neither alive nor dead,
Dog-headed, bosom-eyed, and bird-footed.

XII.

For she was beautiful. Her beauty made

The bright world dim, and everything beside
Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade.

No thought of living spirit could abide
(Which to her looks had ever been betrayed)

On any object in the world so wide,
On any hope within the circling skies,—
But on her form, and in her inmost eyes.

XIII.

Which when the Lady knew, she took her spindle,
And twined three threads of fleecy mist, and three
Long lines of light, such as the dawn may kindle
The clouds and waves and mountains with, and she
As many starbeams, ere their lamps could dwindle
In the belated moon, wound skilfully ;
And with these threads a subtle veil she wove—
A shadow for the splendour of her love.

XIV.

The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
Were stored with magic treasures :—sounds of air
Which had the power all spirits of compelling,
Folded in cells of crystal silence there ;
Such as we hear in youth, and think the feeling
Will never die—yet, ere we are aware,
The feeling and the sound are fled and gone,
And the regret they leave remains alone.

XV.

And there lay Visions swift and sweet and quaint,
Each in its thin sheath like a chrysalis ;—
Some eager to burst forth ; some weak and faint
With the soft burden of intensest bliss
It is their work to bear to many a saint¹
Whose heart adores the shrine which holiest is,
Even Love's ; and others, white, green, grey, and black,
And of all shapes :—and each was at her beck.

XVI.

And odours in a kind of aviary
Of ever-blooming Eden-trees she kept,
Clipped in a floating net a love-sick Fairy
Had woven from dew-beams while the moon yet slept.
As bats at the wired window of a dairy,
They beat their vans ; and each was an adept—
When loosed and missioned, making wings of winds—
To stir sweet thoughts or sad in destined minds.

XVII.

And liquors clear and sweet, whose healthful might
Could medicine the sick soul to happy sleep,
And change eternal death into a night
Of glorious dreams—or, if eyes needs must weep,
Could make their tears all wonder and delight—
She in her crystal phials did closely keep :
If men could drink of those clear phials, 'tis said
The living were not envied of the dead.

XVIII.

Her cave was stored with scrolls of strange device,
The works of some Saturnian Archimage,
Which taught the expiations at whose price
Men from the Gods might win that happy age
Too lightly lost, redeeming native vice,—
And which might quench the earth-consuming rage
Of gold and blood, till men should live and move
Harmonious as the sacred stars above :—

XIX.

And how all things that seem untameable,
Not to be checked and not to be confined,
Obey the spells of Wisdom's wizard skill ;
Time, earth, and fire, the ocean and the wind,
And all their shapes, and man's imperial will ;—
And other scrolls whose writings did unbind
The inmost lore of love—let the profane
Tremble to ask what secrets they contain.

XX.

And wondrous works of substances unknown,
To which the enchantment of her Father's power
Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
Were heaped in the recesses of her bower ;
Carved lamps and chalices, and phials which shone
In their own golden beams—each like a flower
Out of whose depth a firefly shakes his light
Under a cypress in a starless night.

XXI.

At first she lived alone in this wild home,
And her own thoughts were each a minister,
Clothing themselves or with the ocean-foam,
Or with the wind, or with the speed of fire,
To work whatever purposes might come
Into her mind : such power her mighty Sire
Had girt them with, whether to fly or run
Through all the regions which he shines upon.

XXII

The Ocean-nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads, and Naiads with long weedy locks,
Offered to do her bidding through the seas,
Under the earth, and in the hollow rocks,
And far beneath the matted roots of trees,
And in the gnarlèd heart of stubborn oaks ;
So they might live for ever in the light
Of her sweet presence—each a satellite.

XXIII.

"This may not be," the Wizard Maid replied.
"The fountains where the Naiades bedew
Their shining hair at length are drained and dried ;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and strew
Their latest leaf upon the mountains wide ;
The boundless ocean like a drop of dew
Will be consumed ; the stubborn centre must
Be scattered like a cloud of summer dust.

XXIV.

"And ye, with them, will perish one by one.
If I must sigh to think that this shall be,
If I must weep when the surviving Sun
Shall smile on your decay—oh ask not me
To love you till your little race is run ;
I cannot die as ye must.—Over me
Your leaves shall glance—the streams in which ye dwell
Shall be my paths henceforth ; and so farewell."

XXV.

She spoke and wept. The dark and azure well
Sparkled beneath the shower of her bright tears,
And every little circlet where they fell
Flung to the cavern-roof inconstant spheres
And intertangled lines of light. A knell
Of sobbing voices came upon her ears
From those departing forms, o'er the serene
Of the white streams and of the forest green.

XXVI.

All day the Wizard Lady sat aloof;
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity
Under the cavern's fountain-lighted roof;
Or broidering the pictured poesy
Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendour of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining heaven—and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy:—

XXVII.

While on her hearth lay blazing many a piece
Of sandal-wood, rare gums, and cinnamon.
Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is;
Each flame of it is as a precious stone
Dissolved in ever-moving light, and *this*
Belongs to each and all who gaze thereon.¹
The Witch beheld it not, for in her hand
She held a woof that dimmed the burning brand.

XXVIII.

This Lady never slept, but lay in trance
All night within the fountain—as in sleep.
Its emerald crags glowed in her beauty's glance:
Through the green splendour of the water deep
She saw the constellations reel and dance
Like fireflies—and withal did ever keep
The tenour of her contemplations calm,
With open eyes, closed feet, and folded palm.

XXIX.

And, when the whirlwinds and the clouds descended
From the white pinnacles of that cold hill,
She passed at dewfall to a space extended,
Where, in a lawn of flowering asphodel
Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
There yawned an inextinguishable well
Of crimson fire, full even to the brim,
And overflowing all the margin trim :—

XXX.

Within the which she lay when the fierce war
Of wintry winds shook that innocuous liquor,
In many a mimic moon and bearded star,
O'er woods and lawns. The serpent heard it flicker
In sleep, and, dreaming still, he crept afar.
And, when the windless snow descended thicker
Than autumn-leaves, she watched it as it came
Melt on the surface of the level flame.

XXXI.

She had a boat which some say Vulcan wrought
For Venus, as the chariot of her star ;
But it was found too feeble to be fraught
With all the ardours in that sphere which are,
And so she sold it, and Apollo bought
And gave it to this daughter : from a car,
Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat
Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

XXXII.

And others say that, when but three hours old,
The firstborn Love out of his cradle leapt,
And clove dun chaos with his wings of gold,
And, like a horticultural adept,
Stole a strange seed, and wrapped it up in mould,
And sowed it in his mother's star, and kept
Watering it all the summer with sweet dew,
And with his wings fanning it as it grew.

XXXIII.

The plant grew strong and green—the snowy flower
Fell, and the long and gourd-like fruit began
To turn the light and dew by inward power
To its own substance : woven tracery ran
Of light firm texture, ribbed and branching, o'er
The solid rind, like a leaf's veined fan,—
Of which Love scooped this boat, and with soft motion
Piloted it round the circumfluous ocean.

XXXIV.

This boat she moored upon her fount, and lit
A living spirit within all its frame,
Breathing the soul of swiftness into it.
Couched on the fountain—like a panther tame
(One of the twain at Evan's feet that sit),
Or as on Vesta's sceptre a swift flame,
Or on blind Homer's heart a winged thought—
In joyous expectation lay the boat.

XXXV.

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love—all things together grow
Through which the harmony of love can pass;
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow—
A living image which did far surpass
In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

XXXVI.

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both.
In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked;
The bosom lightly swelled with its full youth;
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

XXXVII.

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipped with the speed of liquid lightnings,
Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere.
She led her creature to the boiling springs
Where the light boat was moored, and said "Sit here,"
And pointed to the prow, and took her seat
Beside the rudder with opposing feet.

XXXVIII.

And down the streams which clove those mountains vast,
Around their inland islets, and amid
The panther-peopled forests (whose shade cast
Darkness and odours, and a pleasure hid
In melancholy gloom) the pinnace passed ;
By many a star-surrounded pyramid
Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,
And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

XXXIX.

The silver noon into that winding dell,
With slanted gleam athwart the forest-tops,
Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell ;
A green and glowing light, like that which drops
From folded lilies in which glow-worms dwell
When Earth over her face Night's mantle wraps ;
Between the severed mountains lay on high,
Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

XL.

And, ever as she went, the Image lay
With folded wings and unawakened eyes ;
And o'er its gentle countenance did play
The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies,
Chasing the rapid smiles that would not stay,
And drinking the warm tears, and the sweet sighs
Inhaling, which with busy murmur vain
They had aroused from that full heart and brain.

XLI.

And ever down the prone vale, like a cloud
Upon a stream of wind, the pinnacle went :
Now lingering on the pools, in which abode
The calm and darkness of the deep content
In which they paused ; now o'er the shallow road
Of white and dancing waters, all besprent
With sand and polished pebbles :—mortal boat
In such a shallow rapid could not float.

XLII.

And down the earthquaking cataracts, which shiver
Their snow-like waters into golden air,
Or under chasms unfathomable ever
Sepulchre them, till in their rage they tear
A subterranean portal for the river,
It fled. The circling sunbows did upbear
Its fall down the hoar precipice of spray,
Lighting it far upon its lampless way.

XLIII.

And, when the Wizard Lady would ascend
The labyrinths of some many-winding vale
Which to the inmost mountain upward tend,
She called "Hermaphroditus !"—and the pale
And heavy hue which slumber could extend
Over its lips and eyes, as on the gale
A rapid shadow from a slope of grass,
Into the darkness of the stream did pass.

XLIV.

And it unfurled its heaven-coloured pinions ;
With stars of fire spotting the stream below,
And from above into the Sun's dominions
Flinging a glory like the golden glow
In which Spring clothes her emerald-wingèd minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow,
And moonlight splendour of intensest rime
With which frost paints the pines in winter-time.

XLV.

And then it winnowed the elysian air
Which ever hung about that Lady bright,
With its etherial vans : and, speeding there,
Like a star up the torrent of the night,
Or a swift eagle in the morning glare
Breasting the whirlwind with impetuous flight,
The pinnacle, oared by those enchanted wings,
Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

XLVI.

The water flashed,—like sunlight, by the prow
Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to heaven ;
The still air seemed as if its waves did flow
In tempest down the mountains ; loosely driven,
The Lady's radiant hair streamed to and fro ;
Beneath, the billows, having vainly striven
Indignant and impetuous, roared to feel
The swift and steady motion of the keel.

XLVII.

Or, when the weary moon was in the wane,
Or in the noon of interlunar night,
The Lady Witch in visions could not chain
Her spirit ; but sailed forth under the light
Of shooting stars, and bade extend amain
Its storm-outspeeding wings the Hermaprodite ;
She to the austral waters took her way,
Beyond the fabulous Thamondocana.

XLVIII.

Where, like a meadow which no scythe has shaven,
Which rain could never bend or whirlblast shake,
With the antarctic constellations paven,
Canopus and his crew, lay the austral lake—
There she would build herself a windless haven
Out of the clouds whose moving turrets make
The bastions of the storm, when through the sky
The spirits of the tempest thundered by :—

XLIX.

A haven beneath whose translucent floor
The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomably ;
And around which the solid vapours hoar,
Based on the level waters, to the sky
Lifted their dreadful crags, and, like a shore
Of wintry mountains, inaccessibly
Hemmed-in with rifts and precipices grey,
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay.

L.

And, whilst the outer lake beneath the lash
Of the wind's scourge foamed like a wounded thing,
And the incessant hail with stony clash
Ploughed up the waters, and the flagging wing
Of the roused cormorant in the lightning-flash
Looked like the wreck of some wind-wandering
Fragment of inky thunder-smoke—this haven
Was as a gem to copy heaven engraven.

LI.

On which that Lady played her many pranks,
Circling the image of a shooting star
(Even as a tiger on Hydaspes' banks
Outspeeds the antelopes which speediest are)
In her light boat ; and many quips and cranks
She played upon the water ; till the car
Of the late moon, like a sick matron wan,
To journey from the misty east began.

LII.

And then she called out of the hollow turrets
Of those high clouds, white, golden, and vermilion,
The armies of her ministering spirits.
In mighty legions million after million
They came, each troop emblazoning its merits
On meteor flags ; and many a proud pavilion
Of the intertexture of the atmosphere
They pitched upon the plain of the calm mere.

LIII.

They framed the imperial tent of their great Queen
Of woven exhalations, underlaid
With lambent lightning-fire, as may be seen
A dome of thin and open ivory inlaid
With crimson silk. Cressets from the serene
Hung there, and on the water for her tread
A tapestry of fleece-like mist was strewn,
Dyed in the beams of the ascending moon.

LIV.

And on a throne o'erlaid with starlight, caught
Upon those wandering isles of aery dew
Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not,
She sate, and heard all that had happened new
Between the earth and moon since they had brought
The last intelligence : and now she grew
Pale as that moon lost in the watery night,
And now she wept, and now she laughed outright.

LV.

These were tame pleasures.—She would often climb
The steepest ladder of the crudded rack
Up to some beakèd cape of cloud sublime,
And like Arion on the dolphin's back
Ride singing through the shoreless air. Oft-time,
Following the serpent lightning's winding track,
She ran upon the platforms of the wind,
And laughed to hear the fireballs roar behind.

LVI.

And sometimes to those streams of upper air
Which whirl the earth in its diurnal round
She would ascend, and win the Spirits there
To let her join their chorus. Mortals found
That on those days the sky was calm and fair,
And mystic snatches of harmonious sound
Wandered upon the earth where'er she passed,
And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.

LVII.

But her choice sport was, in the hours of sleep,
To glide adown old Nilus, where he threads
Egypt and Ethiopia from the steep
Of utmost Axumé until he spreads,
Like a calm flock of silver-fleeced sheep,
His waters on the plain,—and crested heads
Of cities and proud temples gleam amid,
And many a vapour-belted pyramid :—

LVIII.

By Mœris and the Mareotid lakes,
Strewn with faint blooms like bridal-chamber floors,
Where naked boys bridling tame water-snakes,
Or charioteering ghastly alligators,
Had left on the sweet waters mighty wakes
Of those huge forms ;—within the brazen doors
Of the Great Labyrinth slept both boy and beast,
Tired with the pomp of their Osirian feast.

LIX.

And where within the surface of the river
The shadows of the massy temples lie,
And never are erased, but tremble ever
Like things which every cloud can doom to die,—
Through lotus-paven canals, and wheresoever
The works of man pierced that serenest sky
With tombs and towers and fanes,—'twas her delight
To wander in the shadow of the night.

LX.

With motion like the spirit of that wind
Whose soft step deepens slumber, her light feet
Passed through the peopled haunts of humankind,
Scattering sweet visions from her presence sweet,—
Through fane and palace-court, and labyrinth mined
With many a dark and subterranean street
Under the Nile ; through chambers high and deep
She passed, observing mortals in their sleep.

LXI.

A pleasure sweet doubtless it was to see
Mortals subdued in all the shapes of sleep.
Here lay two sister-twins in infancy ;
There a lone youth who in his dreams did weep ;
Within, two lovers linked innocently
In their loose locks which over both did creep
Like ivy from one stem ; and there lay calm
Old age with snow-bright hair and folded palm.

LXII.

But other troubled forms of sleep she saw,
Not to be mirrored in a holy song,—
Distortions foul of supernatural awe,
And pale imaginings of visioned wrong,
And all the code of Custom's lawless law
Written upon the brows of old and young.
"This," said the Wizard Maiden, "is the strife
Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life."

LXIII.

And little did the sight disturb her soul.
We, the weak mariners of that wide lake,
Where'er its shores extend or billows roll,
Our course unpiloted and starless make
O'er its wild surface to an unknown goal ;
But she in the calm depths her way could take,
Where in bright bowers immortal forms abide
Beneath the weltering of the restless tide.

LXIV.

And she saw princes couched under the glow
Of sunlike gems ; and round each temple-court
In dormitories ranged, row after row,
She saw the priests asleep,—all of one sort,
For all were educated to be so.
The peasants in their huts, and in the port
The sailors she saw cradled on the waves,
And the dead lulled within their dreamless graves.

LXV.

And all the forms in which those spirits lay
Were to her sight like the diaphanous
Veils in which those sweet ladies oft array
Their delicate limbs who would conceal from us
Only their scorn of all concealment : they
Move in the light of their own beauty thus.
But these and all now lay with sleep upon them,
And little thought a Witch was looking on them.

LXVI.

She all those human figures breathing there
Beheld as living spirits. To her eyes
The naked beauty of the soul lay bare,
And often through a rude and worn disguise
She saw the inner form most bright and fair :
And then she had a charm of strange device,
Which, murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

LXVII.

Alas ! Aurora, what wouldst thou have given
For such a charm, when Tithon became grey—
Or how much, Venus, of thy silver heaven
Wouldst thou have yielded, ere Proserpina
Had half (oh why not all?) the debt forgiven
Which dear Adonis had been doomed to pay—
To any witch who would have taught you it ?
The Heliad doth not know its value yet.

LXVIII.

'Tis said in after times her spirit free
Knew what love was, and felt itself alone.
But holy Dian could not chaster be
Before she stooped to kiss Endymion
Than now this Lady,—like a sexless bee,
Tasting all blossoms and confined to none :
Among those mortal forms the Wizard Maiden
Passed with an eye serene and heart unladen.

LXIX.

To those she saw most beautiful she gave
Strange panacea in a crystal bowl.
They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
And lived thenceforward as if some control,
Mightier than life, were in them; and the grave
Of such, when death oppressed the weary soul,
Was as a green and overarching bower
Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.

LXX.

For, on the night when they were buried, she
Restored the embalmer's ruining, and shook
The light out of the funeral-lamps, to be
A mimic day within that deathly nook;
And she unwound the woven imagery
Of second childhood's swaddling-bands, and took
The coffin, its last cradle, from its niche,
And threw it with contempt into a ditch.

LXXI.

And there the body lay, age after age,
Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and undecaying,
Like one asleep in a green hermitage,—
With gentle smiles about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage
Of death or life; while they were still arraying
In liveries ever new the rapid, blind,
And fleeting generations of mankind.

LXXII.

And she would write strange dreams upon the brain
Of those who were less beautiful, and make
All harsh and crooked purposes more vain
Than in the desert is the serpent's wake
Which the sand covers. All his evil gain
The miser, in such dreams, would rise and shake
Into a beggar's lap; the lying scribe
Would his own lies betray without a bribe.

LXXIII.

The priests would write an explanation full,
Translating hieroglyphics into Greek,
How the God Apis really was a bull,
And nothing more ; and bid the herald stick
The same against the temple-doors, and pull
The old cant down : they licensed all to speak
Whate'er they thought of hawks and cats and geese,
By pastoral letters to each diocese.

LXXIV.

The king would dress an ape up in his crown
And robes, and seat him on his glorious seat,
And on the right hand of the sunlike throne
Would place a gaudy mock-bird to repeat
The chatterings of the monkey. Every one
Of the prone courtiers crawled to kiss the feet
Of their great emperor when the morning came ;
And kissed—alas, how many kiss the same !

LXXV.

The soldiers dreamed that they were blacksmiths, and
Walked out of quarters in somnambulism ;
Round the red anvils you might see them stand
Like Cyclopes in Vulcan's sooty abysm,
Beating their swords to ploughshares :—in a band
The jailors sent those of the liberal schism
Free through the streets of Memphis—much, I wis,
To the annoyance of king Amasis.

LXXVI.

And timid lovers, who had been so coy
They hardly knew whether they loved or not,
Would rise out of their rest, and take sweet joy,
To the fulfilment of their inmost thought ;
And, when next day the maiden and the boy
Met one another, both, like sinners caught,
Blushed at the thing which each believed was done
Only in fancy—till the tenth moon shone ;

LXXVII.

And then the Witch would let them take no ill ;
Of many thousand schemes which lovers find,
The Witch found one,—and so they took their fill
Of happiness in marriage warm and kind.
Friends who, by practice of some envious skill,
Were torn apart (a wide wound, mind from mind)
She did unite again with visions clear
Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

LXXVIII.

These were the pranks she played among the cities
Of mortal men. And what she did to Sprites
And Gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties,
To do her will, and show their subtle sleights,
I will declare another time ; for it is
A tale more fit for the weird winter-nights
Than for these garish summer-days, when we
Scarcely believe much more than we can see.

NOTE ON THE WITCH OF ATLAS, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

WE spent the summer of 1820 at the Baths of San Giuliano, four miles from Pisa. These baths were of great use to Shelley in soothing his nervous irritability. We made several excursions in the neighbourhood. The country around is fertile, and diversified and rendered picturesque by ranges of near hills and more distant mountains. The peasantry are a handsome intelligent race; and there was a glad some sunny heaven spread over us, that rendered home and every scene we visited cheerful and bright. During some of the hottest days of August, Shelley made a solitary journey on foot to the summit of Monte San Pellegrino—a mountain of some height, on the top of which there is a chapel, the object, during certain days of the year, of many pilgrimages. The excursion delighted him while it lasted; though he exerted himself too much, and the effect was considerable lassitude and weakness on his return. During the expedition he conceived the idea, and wrote, in the three days immediately succeeding to his return, the *Witch of Atlas*. This poem is peculiarly characteristic of his tastes—wildly fanciful, full of brilliant imagery, and discarding human interest and passion, to revel in the fantastic ideas that his imagination suggested.

The surpassing excellence of *The Cenci* had made me greatly desire that Shelley should increase his popularity by adopting subjects that would more suit the popular taste than a poem conceived in the abstract and dreamy spirit of the *Witch of Atlas*. It was not only that I wished him to acquire popularity as redounding to his fame; but I believed that he would obtain a greater mastery over his own powers, and greater happiness in his mind, if public applause crowned his endeavours. The few stanzas that precede the poem were addressed to me on my representing these ideas to him. Even now I believe that I was in the right. Shelley did not expect sympathy and approbation from the public; but the want of it took away a portion of the ardour that ought to have sustained him while writing. He was thrown on his own resources, and on the inspiration of his own soul; and wrote because his mind overflowed, without the hope of being appreciated. I had not the most distant wish that he should truckle in opinion, or submit his lofty aspirations for the human race to the low ambition and pride of the many; but I felt sure that, if his poems were more addressed to the common feelings of men, his proper rank among the writers of the day would be acknowledged, and that popularity as a poet would enable his countrymen to do justice to his character and virtues, which in those days it was the mode to attack with the most flagitious calumnies and insulting abuse. That he felt these things deeply cannot be doubted, though he armed himself with the consciousness of acting from a lofty and heroic sense of right. The truth burst from his heart sometimes in solitude, and he would write a few unfinished verses that showed that he felt the sting; among such I find the following:—

Alas! this is not what I thought Life was.
 I knew that there were crimes and evil men,
 Misery and hate; nor did I hope to pass
 Untouched by suffering through the rugged glen.
 In mine own heart I saw as in a glass
 The hearts of others. . . . And, when
 I went among my kind, with triple brass
 Of calm endurance my weak breast I armed,
 To bear scorn, fear, and hate—a woful mass!

I believed that all this morbid feeling would vanish if the chord of sympathy between him and his countrymen were touched. But my persuasions were vain, the mind could not be bent from its natural inclination. Shelley shrunk instinctively from portraying human passion, with its mixture of good and evil, of disappointment and disquiet. Such opened again the wounds of his own heart; and he loved to shelter himself rather in the airiest flights of fancy, forgetting love and hate, and regret and lost hope, in such imaginations as borrowed their hues

from sunrise or sunset, from the yellow moonshine or paly twilight, from the aspect of the far ocean or the shadows of the woods,—which celebrated the singing of the winds among the pines, the flow of a murmuring stream, and the thousand harmonious sounds which Nature creates in her solitudes. These are the materials which form the *Witch of Atlas* : it is a brilliant congregation of ideas such as his senses gathered, and his fancy coloured, during his rambles in the sunny land he so much loved.

EPIPSYCHIDION :

VERSES ADDRESSED TO THE NOBLE AND UNFORTUNATE LADY

EMILIA VIVIANI,¹

NOW IMPRISONED IN THE CONVENT OF ST. ANNE, PISA.

L'anima amante si slancia fuori del creato, e si crea nell' infinito un mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo oscuro e pauroso baratro.—*Her own words.*

My Song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
 Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning,
 Of such hard matter dost thou entertain ;
 Whence, if by misadventure chance should bring
 Thee to base company (as chance may do)
 Quite unaware of what thou dost contain,
 I prithee comfort thy sweet self again,
 My last delight : tell them that they are dull,
 And bid them own that thou art beautiful.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE writer of the following lines died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the wildest of the Sporades, which he had bought, and where he had fitted-up the ruins of an old building ; and where it was his hope to have realized a scheme of life suited perhaps to that happier and better world of which he is now an inhabitant, but hardly practicable in this. His life was singular : less on account of the romantic vicissitudes which diversified it than the ideal tinge which it received from his own character and feelings. The present poem, like the *Vita Nova* of Dante, is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers without a matter-of-fact history of the circumstances to which it relates ; and to a certain other class it must ever remain incomprehensible, from a defect of a common organ of perception for the ideas of which it treats. Not but that "*gran vergogna sarebbe a colui che rimasse cosa sotto veste di figura o di colore rettorico, e domandato non sapesse denudare le sue parole da total veste, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento.*"

The present poem appears to have been intended by the writer as the dedication to some longer one. The stanza on the opposite page is almost a literal translation from Dante's famous canzone—

Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete, &c.

The presumptuous application of the concluding lines to his own composition will raise a smile at the expense of my unfortunate friend : be it a smile not of contempt, but pity.

S.

EPIPSYCHIDION.

SWEET Spirit, sister of that orphan one
Whose empire is the name thou weepst on,
In my heart's temple I suspend to thee
These votive wreaths of withered memory.

Poor captive bird, who from thy narrow cage
Pourest such music that it might assuage
The rugged hearts of those who prisoned thee,
Were they not deaf to all sweet melody,—
This song shall be thy rose ; its petals pale
Are dead, indeed, my adored nightingale !
But soft and fragrant is the faded blossom,
And it has no thorn left to wound thy bosom.

High spirit-wingèd heart, who dost for ever
Beat thine unfeeling bars with vain endeavour,
Till those bright plumes of thought in which arrayed
It oversoared this low and worldly shade
Lie shattered, and thy panting wounded breast
Stains with dear blood its unmaternal nest,—
I weep vain tears : blood would less bitter be,
Yet poured forth gladlier could it profit thee.

Seraph of heaven, too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman
All that is insupportable in thee
Of light and love and immortality !
Sweet benediction in the eternal curse !
Veiled glory of this lampless universe !
Thou moon beyond the clouds ! thou living form
Among the dead ! thou star above the storm !
Thou wonder, and thou beauty, and thou terror !
Thou harmony of Nature's art ! thou mirror
In whom, as in the splendour of the sun,
All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on,—
Ay, even the dim words which obscure thee now
Flash lightning-like with unaccustomed glow !
I pray thee that thou blot from this sad song
All of its much mortality and wrong
With those clear drops which start like sacred dew

From the twin lights thy sweet soul darkens through,
Weeping till sorrow becomes exstasy :
Then smile on it so that it may not die.

I never thought before my death to see
Youth's vision thus made perfect. Emily,
I love thee,—though the world by no thin name
Will hide that love from its unvalued shame.
Would we two had been twins of the same mother !
Or that the name my heart lent to another
Could be a sister's bond for her and thee,
Blending two beams of one eternity !
Yet, were one lawful and the other true,
These names, though dear, could paint not as is due
How beyond refuge I am thine. Ah me !
I am not thine—I am a part of thee !

Sweet lamp ! my moth-like muse has burnt its wings ;
Or, like a dying swan who soars and sings,
Young Love should teach Time, in his own grey style,
All that thou art. Art thou not void of guile—
A lovely soul formed to be blest and bless—
A well of sealed and secret happiness,
Whose waters like blithe light and music are,
Vanquishing dissonance and gloom—a star
Which moves not in the moving heavens, alone—
A smile amid dark frowns—a gentle tone
Amid rude voices—a beloved light—
A solitude, a refuge, a delight—
A lute which those whom Love has taught to play
Make music on to soothe the roughest day,
And lull fond Grief asleep—a buried treasure—
A cradle of young thoughts of wingless pleasure—
A violet-shrouded grave of woe?—I measure
The world of fancies, seeking one like thee,
And find—alas ! mine own infirmity.

She met me, Stranger, upon life's rough way,
And lured me towards sweet death ; as Night by Day,
Winter by Spring, or Sorrow by swift Hope,
Led into light, life, peace. An antelope
In the suspended impulse of its lightness

Were less etherially light. The brightness
Of her divinest presence trembles through
Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew
Embodied in the windless heaven of June,
Amid the splendour-wingèd stars, the moon
Burns inextinguishably beautiful :
And from her lips, as from a hyacinth full
Of honey-dew, a liquid murmur drops,
Killing the sense with passion, sweet as stops
Of planetary music heard in trance.
In her mild lights the starry spirits dance,
The sunbeams of those wells which ever leap
Under the lightnings of the soul—too deep
For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense.
The glory of her being, issuing thence,
Stains the dead blank cold air with a warm shade
Of unentangled intermixture, made
By Love, of light and motion ; one intense
Diffusion, one serene omnipresence,
Whose flowing outlines mingle in their flowing,
Around her cheeks and utmost fingers glowing
With the unintermitted blood, which there
Quivers (as in a fleece of snow-like air
The crimson pulse of living Morn may quiver),^s
Continuously prolonged and ending never,
Till they are lost, and in that beauty furled
Which penetrates and clasps and fills the world ;
Scarce visible from extreme loveliness.
Warm fragrance seems to fall from her light dress,
And her loose hair ; and, where some heavy tress
The air of her own speed has disentwined,
The sweetness seems to satiate the faint wind ;
And in the soul a wild odour is felt,
Beyond the sense, like fiery dews that melt
Into the bosom of a frozen bud.
See where she stands ! a mortal shape indued
With love and life and light and deity,
And motion which may change but cannot die ;
An image of some bright eternity ;
A shadow of some golden dream ; a splendour
Leaving the third sphere pilotless ; a tender
Reflection of the eternal moon of love

Under whose motions life's dull billows move ;
A metaphor of Spring and youth and morning ;
A vision like incarnate April, warning
With smiles and tears Frost the anatomy
Into his summer grave.

Ah woe is me !

What have I dared ? where am I lifted ? how
Shall I descend, and perish not ? I know
That love makes all things equal : I have heard
By mine own heart this joyous truth averred,—
The spirit of the worm beneath the sod,
In love and worship, blends itself with God.

Spouse ! sister ! angel ! pilot of the fate
Whose course has been so starless ! O too late
Beloved, O too soon adored, by me !
For in the fields of immortality
My spirit should at first have worshiped thine,
A divine presence in a place divine ;
Or should have moved beside it on this earth,
A shadow of that substance, from its birth :
But not as now.—I love thee ; yes, I feel
That on the fountain of my heart a seal
Is set, to keep its waters pure and bright
For thee, since in those tears thou hast delight.
We—are we not formed, as notes of music are,
For one another, though dissimilar ?
Such difference without discord as can make
Those sweetest sounds in which all spirits shake,
As trembling leaves in a continuous air.

Thy wisdom speaks in me, and bids me dare
Beacon the rocks on which high hearts are wrecked.
I never was attached to that great sect
Whose doctrine is that each one should select
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion ; though it is in the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread
Who travel to their home among the dead
By the broad highway of the world, and so

With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

True love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
Gazing on many truths ; 'tis like thy light,
Imagination, which from earth and sky,
And from the depths of human fantasy,
As from a thousand prisms and mirrors, fills
The universe with glorious beams, and kills
Error the worm with many a sunlike arrow
Of its reverberated lightning. Narrow
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
The life that wears, the spirit that creates,
One object and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eternity !

Mind from its object differs most in this :
Evil from good ; misery from happiness ;
The baser from the nobler ; the impure
And frail from what is clear and must endure.
If you divide suffering or dross, you may¹
Diminish till it is consumed away ;
If you divide pleasure and love and thought,
Each part exceeds the whole ; and we know not
How much, while any yet remains unshared,
Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared.
This truth is that deep well whence sages draw
The unenvied light of hope ; the eternal law
By which those live to whom this world of life
Is as a garden ravaged, and whose strife
Tills for the promise of a later birth
The wilderness of this elysian earth.

There was a Being whom my spirit oft
Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor

Paved her light steps. On an imagined shore,
Under the grey beak of some promontory,
She met me, robed in such exceeding glory
That I beheld her not. In solitudes
Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
And from the fountains, and the odours deep
Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
Breathed but of her to the enamoured air ;
And from the breezes whether low or loud,
And from the rain of every passing cloud,
And from the singing of the summer birds,
And from all sounds, all silence. In the words
Of antique verse and high romance—in form,
Sound, colour—in whatever checks that storm
Which with the shattered present chokes the past—
And in that best philosophy whose taste
Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
As glorious as a fiery martyrdom—
Her Spirit was the harmony of truth.

Then from the caverns of my dreamy youth
I sprang, as one sandaled with plumes of fire,
And towards the lodestar of my one desire
I flitted, like a dizzy moth whose flight
Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere
A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
As if it were a lamp of earthly flame.
But she, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,
Passed, like a God throned on a wingèd planet,
Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
Into the dreary cone of our life's shade.
And, as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
I would have followed, though the grave between
Yawned like a gulf whose spectres are unseen :
When a voice said, " O thou of hearts the weakest,
The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest."
Then I—"Where?" The world's echo answered "where?"
And in that silence and in my despair
I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
Over my tower of mourning, if it knew

Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul ;
And murmured names and spells which have control
Over the sightless tyrants of our fate.
But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate
The night which closed on her ; nor uncreate
That world within this chaos, mine and me,
Of which she was the veiled divinity—
The world, I say, of thoughts that worshiped her.
And therefore I went forth—with hope and fear
And every gentle passion, sick to death,
Feeding my course with expectation's breath—
Into the wintry forest of our life ;
And, struggling through its error with vain strife,
And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
And half bewildered by new forms, I passed,
Seeking among those untaught foresters
If I could find one form, resembling hers,
In which she might have masked herself from me.
There, one whose voice was venomed melody
Sate by a well, under blue nightshade bowers.
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers ;
Her touch was as electric poison ; flame
Out of her looks into my vitals came ;
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
A killing air which pierced like honey-dew
Into the core of my green heart, and lay
Upon its leaves ;—until, as hair grown grey
O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
With ruins of unseasonable time.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought.
And some were fair—but beauty dies away :
Others were wise—but honeyed words betray :
And one was true—oh why not true to me ?
Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,
Wounded and weak and panting ; the cold day
Trembled for pity of my strife and pain,—
When, like a noonday dawn, there shone again
Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed
As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed

As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
Into themselves, to the eternal Sun ;
The cold chaste Moon, the queen of heaven's bright isles ,
Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles—
That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame
Which ever is transformed yet still the same,
And warms not, but illumines. Young and fair
As the descended Spirit of that sphere,
She hid me, as the Moon may hide the Night
From its own darkness, until all was bright
Between the heaven and earth of my calm mind ;
And, as a cloud charioted by the wind,
She led me to a cave in that wild place,
And sate beside me, with her downward face
Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.
And I was laid asleep, spirit and limb,
And all my being became bright or dim
As the Moon's image in a summer sea,
According as she smiled or frowned on me ;
And there I lay within a chaste cold bed.
Alas ! I then was nor alive nor dead :—
For at her silver voice came Death and Life,
Unmindful each of their accustomed strife,
Masked like twin babes, a sister and a brother,
The wandering hopes of one abandoned mother ;
And through the cavern without wings they flew,
And cried, " Away ! he is not of our crew."
I wept ; and, though it be a dream, I weep.

What storms then shook the ocean of my sleep,
Blotting that Moon whose pale and waning lips
Then shrank as in the sickness of eclipse ;
And how my soul was as a lampless sea,
And who was then its tempest ; and, when she,
The planet of that hour, was quenched, what frost
Crept o'er those waters, till from coast to coast
The moving billows of my being fell
Into a death of ice, immovable ;
And then what earthquakes made it gape and split,
The white Moon smiling all the while on it ;—

These words conceal. If not, each word would be
The key of staunchless tears. Weep not for me !

At length, into the obscure forest came
The vision I had sought through grief and shame.
Athwart that wintry wilderness of thorns
Flashed from her motion splendour like the morn's,
And from her presence life was radiated
Through the grey earth and branches bare and dead ;
So that her way was paved and roofed above
With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love ;
And music from her respiration spread
Like light,—all other sounds were penetrated
By the small, still, sweet spirit of that sound,
So that the savage winds hung mute around ;
And odours warm and fresh fell from her hair,
Dissolving the dull cold in the fore air.
Soft as an incarnation of the Sun,
When light is changed to love, this glorious one
Floated into the cavern where I lay,
And called my spirit ; and the dreaming clay
Was lifted by the thing that dreamed below
As smoke by fire, and in her beauty's glow
I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night
Was penetrating me with living light.
I knew it was the Vision veiled from me
So many years—that it was Emily.

Twin spheres of light who rule this passive earth,
This world of love, this *me* ; and into birth
Awaken all its fruits and flowers, and dart
Magnetic might into its central heart ;
And lift its billows and its mists, and guide
By everlasting laws each wind and tide
To its fit cloud and its appointed cave ;
And lull its storms, each in the craggy grave
Which was its cradle, luring to faint bowers
The armies of the rainbow-wingèd showers ;
And, as those married lights which from the towers
Of heaven look forth, and fold the wandering globe
In liquid sleep and splendour as a robe,
And all their many-mingled influence blend,

If equal yet unlike, to one sweet end,
So ye, bright regents, with alternate sway,
Govern my sphere of being, night and day—
Thou, not disdaining even a borrowed might,
Thou, not eclipsing a remoter light,—
And through the shadow of the seasons three,
From Spring to autumn's sere maturity,
Light it into the winter of the tomb,
Where it may ripen to a brighter bloom !
Thou too, O Comet, beautiful and fierce,
Who drew'st the heart of this frail universe '
Towards thine own ; till, wrecked in that convulsion,
Alternating attraction and repulsion,
Thine went astray, and that was rent in twain ;
Oh float into our azure heaven again !
Be there love's folding-star at thy return !
The living Sun will feed thee from its urn
Of golden fire ; the Moon will veil her horn
In thy last smiles ; adoring Even and Morn
Will worship thee with incense of calm breath
And lights and shadows, as the star of death
And birth is worshiped by those sisters wild
Called Hope and Fear. Upon the heart are piled
Their offerings,—of this sacrifice divine
A world shall be the altar.

Lady mine,
Scorn not these flowers of thought, the fading birth
Which from its heart of hearts that plant puts forth
Whose fruit, made perfect by thy sunny eyes,
Will be as of the trees of paradise.

The day is come, and thou wilt fly with me !
To whatsoever of dull mortality
Is mine remain a vestal sister still ;
To the intense, the deep, the imperishable—
Not mine, but me—henceforth be thou united,
Even as a bride, delighting and delighted.
The hour is come :—the destined star has risen
Which shall descend upon a vacant prison.
The walls are high, the gates are strong, thick set
The sentinels—but true Love never yet

Was thus constrained. It overleaps all fence :
Like lightning, with invisible violence
Piercing its continents ; like heaven's free breath,
Which he who grasps can hold not ; liker Death,
Who rides upon a thought, and makes his way
Through temple, tower, and palace, and the array
Of arms. More strength has Love than he or they ;
For it can burst his charnel, and make free
The limbs in chains, the heart in agony,
The soul in dust and chaos.

Emily,

A ship is floating in the harbour now ;
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow ;
There is a path on the sea's azure floor,—
No keel has ever ploughed that path before ;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles ;
The treacherous ocean has forsworn its wiles ;
The merry mariners are bold and free :
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me ?
Our bark is as an albatross whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple east ;
And we between her wings will sit, while Night
And Day and Storm and Calm pursue their flight,
Our ministers, along the boundless sea,
Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of paradise ;
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,—
Simple and spirited, innocent and bold.
The blue Ægean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam
Kissing the sifted sands and caverns hoar ;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide.
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide ;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,

Or serene morning air. And far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails,
Accompany the noonday nightingales.
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs.
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep ;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain,
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison :
Which is a soul within the soul,—they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.
It is an isle twixt heaven, air, earth, and sea,
Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity ;
Bright as that wandering Eden, Lucifer,
Washed by the soft blue oceans of young air.
It is a favoured place. Famine or blight,
Pestilence, war, and earthquake, never light
Upon its mountain-peaks ; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way.
The wingèd storms, chaunting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew
Their green and golden immortality.
And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight :
Which sun or moon or zephyr draws aside,¹
Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
Blushes and trembles at its own excess.
Yet, like a buried lamp, a soul no less
Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of the Eternal, whose own smile

Unfolds itself, and may be felt not seen
O'er the grey rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices.

But the chief marvel of the wilderness
Is a lone dwelling, built by whom or how
None of the rustic island-people know.
'Tis not a tower of strength, though with its height
It overtops the woods ; but, for delight,
Some wise and tender Ocean-king, ere crime
Had been invented, in the world's young prime,
Reared it, a wonder of that simple time,
An envy of the isles—a pleasure-house
Made sacred to his sister and his spouse.
It scarce seems now a wreck of human art,
But, as it were, Titanic ; in the heart
Of earth having assumed its form, then grown
Out of the mountains, from the living stone
Lifting itself in caverns light and high :
For all the antique and learned imagery
Has been erased, and in the place of it
The ivy and the wild vine interknit
The volumes of their many-twining stems.
Parasite flowers illumine with dewy gems
The lampless halls ; and, when they fade, the sky
Peeps through their winter-woof of tracery
With moonlight patches or star-atoms keen,
Or fragments of the day's intense serene,
Working mosaic on their Parian floors.
And, day and night, aloof, from the high towers
And terraces, the Earth and Ocean seem
To sleep in one another's arms, and dream
Of waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks, and all that we
Read in their smiles, and call reality.

This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed
Thee to be lady of the solitude.
And I have fitted up some chambers there
Looking towards the golden eastern air,
And level with the living winds which flow
Like waves above the living waves below.
I have sent books and music there, and all

Those instruments with which high spirits call
The future from its cradle, and the past
Out of its grave, and make the present last
In thoughts and joys which sleep but cannot die,
Folded within their own eternity.
Our simple life wants little, and true taste
Hires not the pale drudge Luxury to waste
The scene it would adorn ; and therefore still
Nature with all her children haunts the hill.
The ringdove in the embowering ivy yet
Keeps up her love-lament ; and the owls flit
Round the evening tower ; and the young stars glance
Between the quick bats in their twilight dance ;
The spotted deer bask in the fresh moonlight
Before our gate ; and the slow silent night
Is measured by the pants of their calm sleep.
Be this our home in life ; and, when years heap
Their withered hours like leaves on our decay,
Let us become the overhanging day,
The living soul, of this elysian isle—
Conscious, inseparable, one. Meanwhile
We two will rise and sit and walk together
Under the roof of blue Ionian weather ;
And wander in the meadows ; or ascend
The mossy mountains, where the blue heavens bend
With lightest winds to touch their paramour ;
Or linger where the pebble-paven shore
Under the quick faint kisses of the sea
Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy ;—
Possessing and possessed by all that is
Within that calm circumference of bliss,
And by each other, till to love and live
Be one ;—or at the noontide hour arrive
Where some old cavern hoar seems yet to keep
The moonlight of the expired Night asleep,
Through which the awakened Day can never peep ;
A veil for our seclusion, close as Night's,
Where secure sleep may kill thine innocent lights—
Sleep, the fresh dew of languid love, the rain
Whose drops quench kisses till they burn again.
And we will talk, until thought's melody
Become too sweet for utterance, and it die

In words, to live again in looks, which dart
With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
Harmonizing silence without a sound.
Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound,
And our veins beat together ; and our lips,
With other eloquence than words, eclipse
The soul that burns between them ; and the wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
Confused in passion's golden purity,
As mountain-springs under the morning sun.
We shall become the same, we shall be one
Spirit within two frames, oh wherefore two ?
One passion in twin hearts, which grows and grew
Till, like two meteors of expanding flame,
Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
Touch, mingle, are transfigured ; ever still
Burning, yet ever inconsumable ;
In one another's substance finding food,
Like flames too pure and light and unimbued
To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
Which point to heaven and cannot pass away :
One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One heaven, one hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation !

Woe is me !

The wingèd words on which my soul would pierce
Into the height of Love's rare universe
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire—
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire !

Weak verses, go, kneel at your Sovereign's feet,
And say :—"We are the masters of thy slave ;
What wouldest thou with us and ours and thine ?"
Then call your sisters from Oblivion's cave,
All singing loud : "Love's very pain is sweet ;
But its reward is in the world divine,
Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave."
So shall ye live when I am there. Then haste
Over the hearts of men, until ye meet
Marina, Vanna, Primus, and the rest,
And bid them love each other, and be blest ;
And leave the troop which errs and which reproves
And come and be my guest—for I am Love's.

ADONAIS;

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS.*

Ἀσθήρ πρὶν μὲν ἑλαμπες ἐνὶ ζώουσιν ἑὼς.
 Νῦν δὲ θανὼν λάμπεις ἔσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις.

PLATO

PREFACE.

Φάρμακον ἦλθε Βίων τοτὶ σὸν στόμα φάρμακον εἶδες.
 Πῶς τευ τοῖς χεῖλεσσι ποτίδραμε κόκκ ἐγλυκάνθη;
 Τίς δὲ βροτὸς τοσσούτον ἀνάμερος ἢ κεράσαι τοι,
 Ἡ δοῦναι λαλέοντι τὸ φάρμακον; ἔκφυγεν ψῶδάν.

MOSCHUS, EPITAPH. BION.

IT is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earlier compositions were modelled proves at least that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the [23rd] of [February] 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and, where canker-worms abound, what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his *Endymion* which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind. The agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued; and the succeeding acknowledgments, from more candid critics, of the true greatness of his powers, were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows, or one, like Keats's, composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calumniator. As to *Endymion*, was it a poem, whatever might be its defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated with various degrees of complacency and panegyric *Paris*, and *Woman*, and *A Syrian Tale*, and Mrs. Lefanu, and Mr. Barret, and Mr Howard Payne, and a long list of the illustrious obscure? Are these the men who, in their venal good-nature, presumed to draw a parallel between the Rev. Mr. Milman and Lord Byron? What gnat did they strain at here, after having swallowed all those camels? Against what woman taken in adultery dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone? Miserable

man : you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest, specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's life were not made known to me until the *Elegy* was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of *Endymion* was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits ; the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness, by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed, "almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend." Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from "such stuff as dreams are made of." His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career. May the unextinguished spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against oblivion for his name !

ADONAI8.

I.

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead !
Oh weep for Adonais, though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head !
And thou, sad Hour selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow ! Say : “ With me
Died Adonais ! Till the future dares
Forget the past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity.”

II.

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness ? Where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died ? With veiled eyes,
Mid listening Echoes, in her paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.

III.

Oh weep for Adonais—he is dead !
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep !—
Yet wherefore ? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep,
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep ;
For he is gone where all things wise and fair
Descend. Oh dream not that the amorous deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air ;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

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IV.

Most musical of mourners, weep again !
 Lament anew, Urania !—He died
 Who was the sire of an immortal strain,
 Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride
 The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
 Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite
 Of lust and blood. He went unterrified
 Into the gulf of death ; but his clear sprite
 Yet reigns o'er earth, the third among the Sons of Light.

V.

Most musical of mourners, weep anew !
 Not all to that bright station dared to climb :
 And happier they their happiness who knew,
 Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
 In which suns perished. Others more sublime,
 Struck by the envious wrath of man or god, *God in 1891*
 Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime ;
 And some yet live, treading the thorny road
 Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

VI.

But now thy youngest, dearest one has perished,
 The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
 Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
 And fed with true-love tears instead of dew.
 Most musical of mourners, weep anew !
 Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
 The bloom whose petals, nipped before they blew, *nupt. 18*
 Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste ;
 The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII.

To that high Capital where kingly Death
 Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay
 He came ; and bought, with price of purest breath,
 A grave among the eternal.—Come away !
 Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
 Is yet his fitting charnel-roof, while still
 He lies as if in dewy sleep he lay.
 Awake him not ! surely he takes his fill
 Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII.

He will awake no more, oh never more !
 Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
 The shadow of white Death, and at the door
 Invisible Corruption waits to trace
 His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place ;
 The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
 Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
 So fair a prey, till darkness and the law
 Of change shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

IX.

Oh weep for Adonais !—The quick Dreams,
 The passion-wingèd ministers of thought,
 Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
 Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
 The love which was its music, wander not—
 Wander no more from kindling brain to brain,
 But droop there whence they sprung ; and mourn their lot
 Round the cold heart where, after their sweet pain,
 They ne'er will gather strength or find a home again.

X.

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
 And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries,
 " Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead !
 See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
 Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
 A tear some dream has loosened from his brain."
 Lost angel of a ruined paradise !
 She knew not 'twas her own,—as with no stain
 She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

XI.

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
 Washed his light limbs, as if embalming them ;
 Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
 The wreath upon him, like an anadem
 Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem ;
 Another in her wilful grief would break
 Her bow and wingèd reeds, as if to stem
 A greater loss with one which was more weak,—
 And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

clipt - 1891

XII.

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
 That mouth whence it was wont to draw the breath
 Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
 And pass into the panting heart beneath
 With lightning and with music : the damp death
 Quenched its caress upon his icy lips ;
 And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
 Of moonlight vapour which the cold night clips,
 It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its eclipse.

XIII.

And others came. Desires and Adorations ;
 Wingèd Persuasions, and veiled Destinies ;
 Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering incarnations
 Of Hopes and Fears, and twilight Fantasies ;
 And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs ;
 And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
 Of her own dying smile instead of eyes, +
 Came in slow pomp ;—the moving pomp might seem
 Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

XIV.

All he had loved, and moulded into thought
 From shape and hue and odour and sweet sound,
 Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
 Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
 Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
 Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day ;
 Afar the melancholy Thunder moaned,
 Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
 And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

XV.

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
 And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
 And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
 Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
 Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day ;
 Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
 Than those for whose disdain she pined away
 Into a shadow of all sounds :—a drear
 Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

Korath's
 biggest
 editorial
 corrections

Phanias (18)

XVI.

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves ; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the sullen Year ?
To Phœbus was not Hyacinth so dear,
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonais ; wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears,—odour, to sighing ruth.

XVII.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale,
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain ;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee : the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest !

XVIII.

Ah woe is me ! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year.
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone ;
The ants, the bees, the swallows, re-appear ;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier ;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere ;
And the green lizard and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

XIX.

Through wood and stream and field and hill and ocean,
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst,
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on chaos. In its steam immersed,
The lamps of heaven flash with a softer light ;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst,
Diffuse themselves, and spend in love's delight
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

XX.

The leprous corpse, touched by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath ;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death,
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath.
Nought we know dies : shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning ? The intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

XXI.

Alas that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal ! Woe is me !
Whence are we, and why are we ? of what scene
The actors or spectators ? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

XXII.

He will awake no more, oh never more !
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother ! Rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake in thy heart's core
A wound more fierce than his, with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their Sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried "Arise" ;
Swift as a thought by the snake memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

XXIII.

She rose like an autumnal Night that springs
Out of the east, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt, Urania ;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist ; so swept her on her way,
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

XXIV.

Out of her secret paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone and steel
And human hearts, which, to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell.
And barbèd tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
Rent the soft form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

XXV.

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night !
Leave me not !" cried Urania. Her distress
Roused Death : Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

XXVI.

"Stay yet awhile ! speak to me once again !
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live !
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais ! I would give
All that I am, to be as thou now art :—
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart.

XXVII.

"O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den ?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear ?—
Or, hadst thou waited the full cycle when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

XXVIII.

"The herded wolves bold only to pursue,
The obscene ravens clamorous o'er the dead,
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true,
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion,—how they fled,
When, like Apollo from his golden bow,
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped,
And smiled !—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

XXIX.

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn ;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again.
So is it in the world of living men :
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven ; and, when
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

XXX.

Thus ceased she : and the Mountain Shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent.
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow. From her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And love taught grief to fall like music from his tongue.

XXXI.

Midst others of less note came one frail form,
A phantom among men, companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell. He, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness
Actæon-like ; and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts along that rugged way
Pursued like raging hounds their father and their prey.

XXXII.

A pard-like Spirit beautiful and swift—
A love in desolation masked—a power
Girt round with weakness ; it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour.
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow ;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken ? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly : on a cheek
The life can burn in blood even while the heart may break.

XXXIII.

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white and pied and blue ;
And a light spear topped with a cypress-cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it. Of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart ;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

XXXIV.

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears. Well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own.
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sang new sorrow, sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured " Who art thou ?"
He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—oh that it should be so !

XXXV.

What softer voice is hushed over the dead ?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown ?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan ?
If it be he who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured, the departed one,
Let me not vex with inharmonious sighs
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI.

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh
 What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
 Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
 The nameless worm would now itself disown;
 It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
 Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
 But what was howling in one breast alone,
 Silent with expectation of the song
 Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

XXXVII.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
 Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
 Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
 But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
 And ever at thy season be thou free
 To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:
 Remorse and self-contempt shall cling to thee,
 Hot shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
 And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

XXXVIII.

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
 Far from these carrion-kites that scream below.
 He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
 Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.
 Dust to the dust: but the pure spirit shall flow
 Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
 A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
 Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
 Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

XXXIX.

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep!
 He hath awakened from the dream of life.
 'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
 With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
 And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
 Invulnerable nothings. *We* decay
 Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
 Convulse us and consume us day by day,
 And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

XL.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night.
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again.
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure ; and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey, in vain—
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI.

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he ;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone !
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan !
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains ! and, thou Air,
Which like a mourning-veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair !

XLII.

He is made one with Nature. There is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird.
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,—
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own,
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely. He doth bear
His part, while the One Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world ; compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear ;
Torturing the unwilling dross, that checks its flight,
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear ;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the heaven's light.

XLIV.

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not ;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there,
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

XLV.

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought
Far in the unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him ; Sidney, as he fought,
And as he fell, and as he lived and loved,
Sublimely mild, a spirit without spot,
Arose ; and Lucan, by his death approved ;—
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

XLVI.

And many more, whose names on earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry ;
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an heaven of song.
Assume thy wingèd throne, thou Vesper of our throng !"

XLVII.

Who mourns for Adonais ? Oh come forth,
Fond wretch, and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous earth ;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Sate the void circumference : then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night ;
And keep thy heart light, lest it make thee sink,
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

XLVIII.

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
 Oh not of him, but of our joy. 'Tis nought
 That ages, empires, and religions, there
 Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought ;
 For such as he can lend—they borrow not
 Glory from those who made the world their prey ;
 And he is gathered to the kings of thought
 Who waged contention with their time's decay,
 And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX.

Go thou to Rome,—at once the paradise,
 The grave, the city, and the wilderness ;
 And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
 And flowering weeds and fragrant copses dress
 The bones of Desolation's nakedness,
 Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
 Thy footsteps to a slope of green access,
 Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
 A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

L.

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
 Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand ;
 And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
 Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
 This refuge for his memory, doth stand
 Like flame transformed to marble ; and beneath
 A field is spread, on which a newer band
 Have pitched in heaven's smile their camp of death,
 Welcoming him we lose with scarce-extinguished breath.

LI.

Here pause. These graves are all too young as yet
 To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
 Its charge to each ; and, if the seal is set
 Here on one fountain of a mourning mind,
 Break it not thou ! too surely shalt thou find
 Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
 Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
 Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
 What Adonais is why fear we to become ?

LII.

The One remains, the many change and pass ;
Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows fly ;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek !
Follow where all is fled !—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my heart ?
Thy hopes are gone before : from all things here
They have departed ; thou shouldst now depart.
A light is past from the revolving year,
And man and woman ; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles, the low wind whispers near :
'Tis Adonais calls ! Oh hasten thither !
No more let life divide what death can join together.

LIV.

That light whose smile kindles the universe,
That beauty in which all things work and move,
That benediction which the eclipsing curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which, through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me ; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given.
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven !
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar !
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

HELLAS;

A LYRICAL DRAMA.

MANTIS 'EIM' 'ESΘAON 'ATONON.

ŒDIP. COLON.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY
 PRINCE ALEXANDER MAVROCORDATO,
 LATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
 TO THE HOSPODAR OF WALLACHIA,
 THE DRAMA OF HELLAS IS INSCRIBED,
 AS AN IMPERFECT TOKEN
 OF THE ADMIRATION, SYMPATHY, AND FRIENDSHIP,
 OF THE AUTHOR.

PISA, November 1, 1821.

PREFACE.

THE poem of *Hellas*, written at the suggestion of the events of the moment, is a mere improvise, and derives its interest (should it be found to possess any) solely from the intense sympathy which the author feels with the cause he would celebrate.

The subject, in its present state, is insusceptible of being treated otherwise than lyrically; and, if I have called this poem a drama from the circumstance of its being composed in dialogue, the license is not greater than that which has been assumed by other poets who have called their productions epics only because they have been divided into twelve or twenty-four books.

The *Persæ* of Æschylus afforded me the first model of my conception, although the decision of the glorious contest now waging in Greece being yet suspended forbids a catastrophe parallel to the return of Xerxes and the desolation of the Persians. I have therefore contented myself with exhibiting a series of lyric pictures, and with having wrought upon the curtain of futurity, which falls upon the unfinished scene, such figures of indistinct and visionary delineation as suggest the final triumph of the Greek cause, as a portion of the cause of civilization and social improvement.

The drama (if drama it must be called) is, however, so inartificial that I doubt whether, if recited on the Threspian waggon to an Athenian village at the Dionysiaca, it would have obtained the prize of the goat. I shall bear with equanimity any punishment, greater than the loss of such a reward, which the Aristarchi of the hour may think fit to inflict.

The only *goat-song* which I have yet attempted has, I confess, in spite of the

unfavourable nature of the subject, received a greater and a more valuable portion of applause than I expected, or than it deserved.

Common fame is the only authority which I can allege for the details which form the basis of the poem, and I must trespass upon the forgiveness of my readers for the display of newspaper erudition to which I have been reduced. Undoubtedly, until the conclusion of the war, it will be impossible to obtain an account of it sufficiently authentic for historical materials; but poets have their privilege, and it is unquestionable that actions of the most exalted courage have been performed by the Greeks—that they have gained more than one naval victory—and that their defeat in Wallachia was signalized by circumstances of heroism more glorious even than victory.

The apathy of the rulers of the civilized world to the astonishing circumstance of the descendants of that nation to which they owe their civilization rising as it were from the ashes of their ruin is something perfectly inexplicable to a mere spectator of the shows of this mortal scene. We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts, have their root in Greece. But for Greece—Rome, the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis, of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms, and we might still have been savages and idolaters; or, what is worse, might have arrived at such a stagnant and miserable state of social institution as China and Japan possess.

The human form and the human mind attained to a perfection in Greece which has impressed its image on those faultless productions whose very fragments are the despair of modern art; and has propagated impulses which cannot cease, through a thousand channels of manifest or imperceptible operation, to ennoble and delight mankind until the extinction of the race.

The modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings whom the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our kind; and he inherits much of their sensibility, their rapidity of conception, their enthusiasm, and their courage. If in many instances he is degraded by moral and political slavery to the practice of the basest vices it engenders, and that below the level of ordinary degradation; let us reflect that the corruption of the best produces the worst, and that habits which subsist only in relation to a peculiar state of social institution may be expected to cease so soon as that relation is dissolved. In fact, the Greeks, since the admirable novel of *Anastatius* could have been a faithful picture of their manners, have undergone most important changes; the flower of their youth, returning to their country from the universities of Italy, Germany, and France, have communicated to their fellow-citizens the latest results of that social perfection of which their ancestors were the original source. The university of Chios contained, before the breaking-out of the revolution, eight-hundred students, and among them several Germans and Americans. The munificence and energy of the Greek princes and merchants, directed to the renovation of their country with a spirit and a wisdom which has few examples, are above all praise.

The English permit their own oppressors to act according to their natural sympathy with the Turkish tyrant, and to brand upon their name the indelible blot of an alliance with the enemies of domestic happiness, of christianity, and civilization.

Russia desires to possess, not to liberate, Greece; and is contented to see the Turks, its natural enemies, and the Greeks, its intended slaves, enfeeble each other, until one or both fall into its net. The wise and generous policy of England would have consisted in establishing the independence of Greece, and in maintaining it both against Russia and the Turk;—but when was the oppressor generous or just?

The Spanish Peninsula is already free. France is tranquil in the enjoyment of a partial exemption from the abuses which its unnatural and feeble government are vainly attempting to revive. The seed of blood and misery has been sown in Italy, and a more vigorous race is arising to go forth to the harvest. The world waits only the news of a revolution of Germany, to see the tyrants who have pinnacle themselves on its supineness precipitated into the ruin from

which they shall never arise. Well do these destroyers of mankind know their enemy, when they impute the insurrection in Greece to the same spirit before which they tremble throughout the rest of Europe ; and that enemy well knows the power and the cunning of its opponents, and watches the moment of their approaching weakness and inevitable division, to wrest the bloody sceptres from their grasp.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MAHMUD.
HASSAN.

DAOOD.
AHASUERUS, a Jew.

CHORUS of Greek Captive Women. The Phantom of Mahomet the Second.
Messengers, Slaves, and Attendants.

SCENE.—Constantinople. TIME.—Sunset.

SCENE—A Terrace on the Seraglio.

MAHMUD, *sleeping*; an Indian Slave sitting beside his Couch.

CHORUS OF GREEK CAPTIVE WOMEN.

WE strew these opiate flowers
On thy restless pillow,—
They were stripped from orient bowers,
By the Indian billow.
Be thy sleep
Calm and deep,
Like theirs who fell—not ours who weep!

INDIAN.

Away, unlovely dreams!
Away, false shapes of sleep!
Be his, as heaven seems,
Clear and bright and deep,
Soft as love, and calm as death,
Sweet as a summer night without a breath!

CHORUS.

Sleep, sleep! Our song is laden
With the soul of slumber;
It was sung by a Samian maiden
Whose lover was of the number
Who now keep
That calm sleep
Whence none may wake, where none shall weep.

INDIAN.

I touch thy temples pale;
I breathe my soul on thee:
And, could my prayers avail,
All my joy should be
Dead, and I would live to weep,
So thou mightst win one hour of quiet sleep.

CHORUS.

Breathe low, low,
The spell of the mighty Mistress now !
When Conscience lulls her sated snake,
And tyrants sleep, let Freedom wake.
Breathe low, low,
The words which, like secret fire, shall flow
Through the veins of the frozen earth—low, low !

SEMICHORUS I.

Life may change, but it may fly not :
Hope may vanish, but can die not ;
Truth be veiled, but still it burneth ;
Love repulsed, but it returneth.

SEMICHORUS II.

Yet were life a charnel where
Hope lay confined with Despair ;
Yet were truth a sacred lie ;
Love were lust—

SEMICHORUS I.

If Liberty
Lent not life its soul of light,
Hope its iris of delight,
Truth its prophet's robe to wear,
Love its power to give and bear.

CHORUS.

In the great morning of the world,
The Spirit of God with might unfurled
The flag of Freedom over chaos,
And all its banded anarchs fled,
Like vultures frightened from Imaus
Before an earthquake's tread.—
So from Time's tempestuous dawn
Freedom's splendour burst and shone :
Thermopylæ and Marathon
Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted,
The springing fire. The wingèd glory
On Philippi half alighted,
Like an eagle on a promontory.
Its unwearied wings could fan

The quenchless ashes of Milan.
From age to age, from man to man,
It lived ; and lit from land to land
Florence, Albion, Switzerland.
Then night fell ; and, as from night,
Re-assuming fiery flight,
From the west swift Freedom came,
Against the course of heaven and doom,
A second sun arrayed in flame,
To burn, to kindle, to illume.
From far Atlantis its young beams
Chased the shadows and the dreams.
France, with all her sanguine steams,
Hid, but quenched it not ; again
Through clouds its shafts of glory rain
From utmost Germany to Spain.

As an eagle fed with morning
Scorns the embattled tempest's warning
When she seeks her aerie hanging
In the mountain-cedar's hair,
And her brood expect the clanging
Of her wings through the wild air,
Sick with famine ; Freedom so
To what of Greece remaineth now
Returns. Her hoary ruins glow
Like orient mountains lost in day ;
Beneath the safety of her wings
Her renovated nurslings play,
And in the naked lightnings ¹
Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.
Let Freedom leave, where'er she flies,
A desert, or a paradise ;
Let the beautiful and the brave
Share her glory, or a grave !

SEMICHORUS I.

With the gifts of gladness
Greece did thy cradle strew.

SEMICHORUS II.

With the tears of sadness
Greece did thy shroud bedew.

SEMICHORUS I.

With an orphan's affection
She followed thy bier through time :

SEMICHORUS II.

And at thy resurrection
Re-appeareth, like thou, sublime.

SEMICHORUS I.

If heaven should resume thee,
To heaven shall her spirit ascend.

SEMICHORUS II.

If hell should entomb thee,
To hell shall her high hearts bend.

SEMICHORUS I.

If annihilation—

SEMICHORUS II.

Dust let her glories be ;
And a name and a nation
Be forgotten, Freedom, with thee !

INDIAN.

His brow grows darker—Breathe not—move not !
He starts—he shudders. Ye, that love not,
With your panting loud and fast
Have awakened him at last.

Mahmud (starting from his sleep). Man the Seraglio-guard !
make fast the gate !

What ! from a cannonade of three short hours ?
'Tis false ! that breach towards the Bosphorus
Cannot be practicable yet.—Who stirs ?
Stand to the match ; that, when the foe prevails,
One spark may mix in reconciling ruin
The conqueror and the conquered ! Heave the tower
Into the gap—wrench off the roof !

Enter HASSAN.

Ha ! what !

The truth of day lightens upon my dream,
And I am Mahmud still.

Hassan.

Your Sublime Highness

Is strangely moved.

Mahmud. The times do cast strange shadows
 On those who watch, and who must rule their course
 Lest they, being first in peril as in glory,
 Be whelmed in the fierce ebb :—and these are of them.
 Thrice has a gloomy vision hunted me
 As thus from sleep into the troubled day;
 It shakes me as the tempest shakes the sea,
 Leaving no figure upon memory's glass.
 Would that . . . No matter. Thou didst say thou knewest
 A Jew whose spirit is a chronicle
 Of strange and secret and forgotten things.
 I bade thee summon him :—'tis said his tribe
 Dream, and are wise interpreters of dreams.

Hassan. The Jew of whom I spake is old—so old
 He seems to have outlived a world's decay ;
 The hoary mountains and the wrinkled ocean
 Seem younger still than he. His hair and beard
 Are whiter than the tempest-sifted snow ;
 His cold pale limbs and pulseless arteries
 Are like the fibres of a cloud instinct
 With light, and, to the soul that quickens them,
 Are as the atoms of the mountain-drift
 To the winter wind. But from his eye looks forth
 A life of unconsumèd thought which pierces
 The present, and the past, and the to-come.
 Some say that this is he whom the great prophet
 Jesus the son of Joseph, for his mockery,
 Mocked with the curse of immortality.
 Some feign that he is Enoch. Others dream
 He was præ-Adamite, and has survived
 Cycles of generation and of ruin.
 The sage, in truth, by dreadful abstinence,
 And conquering penance of the mutinous flesh,
 Deep contemplation and unwearied study,
 In years outstretched beyond the date of man,
 May have attained to sovereignty and science
 Over those strong and secret things and thoughts
 Which others fear and know not.

Mahmud. I would talk
 With this old Jew.

Hassan. Thy will is even now
 Made known to him where he dwells in a sea-cavern

Mid the Demonesi, less accessible
 Than thou or God. He who would question him
 Must sail alone at sunset where the stream
 Of ocean sleeps around those foamless isles,
 When the young moon is westering as now,
 And evening airs wander upon the wave.
 And, when the pines of that bee-pasturing isle,
 Green Erebinthus, quench the fiery shadow
 Of his gilt prow within the sapphire water,
 Then must the lonely helmsman cry aloud
 "Ahasuerus!" and the caverns round
 Will answer "Ahasuerus!" If his prayer
 Be granted, a faint meteor will arise,
 Lighting him over Marmora; and a wind
 Will rush out of the sighing pine-forest,
 And with the wind a storm of harmony
 Unutterably sweet, and pilot him
 Through the soft twilight to the Bosphorus.
 Thence, at the hour and place and circumstance
 Fit for the matter of their conference,
 The Jew appears. Few dare, and few who dare
 Win the desired communion . . . But that shout
 Bodes — [A shout within.]

Mahmud. Evil, doubtless; like all human sounds.
 Let me converse with spirits.

Hassan. That shout again!

Mahmud. This Jew whom thou hast summoned—

Hassan. Will be here—

Mahmud. When the omnipotent hour to which are yoked
 He, I, and all things, shall compel :—enough.
 Silence those mutineers—that drunken crew
 That crowd about the pilot in the storm.
 Ay, strike the foremost shorter by a head.
 They weary me, and I have need of rest.
 Kings are like stars: they rise and set, they have
 The worship of the world, but no repose. [Exeunt severally.]

CHORUS.

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
 From creation to decay,
 Like the bubbles on a river,
 Sparkling, bursting, borne away.

But they are still immortal
Who, through birth's orient portal
And death's dark chasm hurrying to and fro,
Clothe their unceasing flight
In the brief dust and light
Gathered around their chariots as they go :
New shapes they still may weave,
New gods, new laws, receive :
Bright or dim are they, as the robes they last
On Death's bare ribs had cast.

A Power from the unknown God,
A Promethean Conqueror, came ;
Like a triumphal path he trod
The thorns of death and shame.
A mortal shape to him
Was like the vapour dim
Which the orient planet animates with light.
Hell, sin, and slavery, came,
Like bloodhounds mild and tame,
Nor preyed until their lord had taken flight.
The moon of Mahomet
Arose, and it shall set :
While, blazoned as on heaven's immortal noon,
The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep
From one whose dreams are paradise
Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
And Day peers forth with her blank eyes ;
So fleet, so faint, so fair,
The Powers of Earth and Air
Fled from the folding-star of Bethlehem :
Apollo, Pan, and Love,
And even Olympian Jove,
Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them.
Our hills and seas and streams,
Dispeopled of their dreams,
Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
Wailed for the golden years.

Enter MAHMUD, HASSAN, DAOOD, and others.

Mahmud. More gold? Our ancestors bought gold with victory,
And shall I sell it for defeat?

Daoud.

The Janizars

Clamour for pay.

Mahmud. Go bid them pay themselves
With Christian blood ! Are there no Grecian virgins
Whose shrieks and spasms and tears they may enjoy ?
No infidel children to impale on spears ?
No hoary priests after that Patriarch
Who bent the curse against his country's heart,
Which clove his own at last ? Go bid them kill :
Blood is the seed of gold.

Daood.

Daoud. It has been sown,
And yet the harvest to the sicklemen
Is as a grain to each.

Mahmud.

Then take this signet :

Unlock the seventh chamber, in which lie
The treasures of victorious Solymán,—
An empire's spoil stored for a day of ruin :
O spirit of my sires ! is it not come ?
The prey-birds and the wolves are gorged, and sleep :
But these, who spread *their* feast on the red earth,
Hunger for gold, which fills not.—See them fed ;
Then lead them to the rivers of fresh death. [Exit DAOD
Oh miserable dawn, after a night
More glorious than the day which it usurped !
O faith in God ! O power on earth ! O word
Of the great Prophet, whose o'ershadowing wings
Darkened the thrones and idols of the west,
Now bright !—for thy sake cursèd be the hour,
Even as a father by an evil child,
When the orient moon of Islam rolled in triumph
From Caucasus to white Ceraunia !
Ruin above, and anarchy below ;
Terror without, and treachery within ;
The chalice of destruction full, and all
Thirsting to drink ; and who among us dares
To dash it from his lips ? and where is hope ?

Hassan. The lamp of our dominion still rides high ;
One God is God—Mahomet is his Prophet.
Four hundred thousand Moslems, from the limits

Of utmost Asia, irresistibly
Throng, like full clouds at the sirocco's cry,
But not, like them, to weep their strength in tears ;
They bear destroying lightning, and their step
Wakes earthquake, to consume and overwhelm,
And reign in ruin. Phrygian Olympus,
Tmolus, and Latmos, and Mycale, roughen
With horrent arms : and lofty ships even now,
Like vapours anchored to a mountain's edge,
Freighted with fire and whirlwind, wait at Scala
The convoy of the ever-veering wind.
Samos is drunk with blood ; the Greek has paid
Brief victory with swift loss and long despair.
The false Moldavian serfs fled fast and far
When the fierce shout of Allah-illa-Allah
Rose like the war-cry of the northern wind,
Which kills the sluggish clouds, and leaves a flock
Of wild swans struggling with the naked storm :
So were the lost Greeks on the Danube's day !
If night is mute, yet the returning sun
Kindles the voices of the morning birds ;
Nor at thy bidding less exultingly
Than birds rejoicing in the golden day
The Anarchies of Africa unleash
Their tempest-wingèd cities of the sea,
To speak in thunder to the rebel world.
Like sulphurous clouds half-shattered by the storm,
They sweep the pale Ægean ; while the Queen
Of Ocean, bound upon her island throne
Far in the west, sits mourning that her sons,
Who frown on freedom, spare a smile for thee.
Russia still hovers, as an eagle might
Within a cloud near which a kite and crane
Hang tangled in inextricable fight,
To stoop upon the victor ; for she fears
The name of freedom, even as she hates thine.
But recreant Austria loves thee as the grave
Loves pestilence, and her slow dogs of war,
Fleshed with the chase, come up from Italy,
And howl upon their limits : for they see
The panther freedom fled to her old cover
Amid seas and mountains, and a mightier brood

Crouch round. What anarch wears a crown or mitre,
 Or bears the sword, or grasps the key of gold,
 Whose friends are not thy friends, whose foes thy foes?
 Our arsenals and our armouries are full ;
 Our forts defy assault ; ten-thousand cannon
 Lie ranged upon the beach, and hour by hour
 Their earth-convulsing wheels affright the city ;
 The galloping of fiery steeds makes pale
 The Christian merchant, and the yellow Jew
 Hides his hoard deeper in the faithless earth.
 Like clouds, and like the shadows of the clouds,
 Over the hills of Anatolia,
 Swift in wide troops the Tartar chivalry
 Sweep ;—the far-flashing of their starry lances
 Reverberates the dying light of day.
 We have one God, one king, one hope, one law ;
 But many-headed Insurrection stands
 Divided in itself, and soon must fall.

Mahmud. Proud words, when deeds come short, are season-
 able !

Look, Hassan, on yon crescent moon emblazoned
 Upon that shattered flag of fiery cloud
 Which leads the rear of the departing day,
 Wan emblem of an empire fading now.
 See how it trembles in the bloodred air,
 And, like a mighty lamp whose oil is spent,
 Shrinks on the horizon's edge ; while, from above,
 One star with insolent and victorious light
 Hovers above its fall, and with keen beams,
 Like arrows through a fainting antelope,
 Strikes its weak form to death.

Hassan.

Even as that moon

Renews itself——

Mahmud.

Shall we be not renewed !

Far other bark than ours were needed now
 To stem the torrent of descending time.
 The Spirit that lifts the slave before his lord
 Stalks through the capitals of armed kings,
 And spreads his ensign in the wilderness ;
 Exults in chains ; and, when the rebel falls,
 Cries like the blood of Abel from the dust ;—
 And the inheritors of the earth, like beasts

When earthquake is unleashed, with idiot fear
Cower in their kingly dens—as I do now.
What were defeat, when victory must appall !
Or danger, when security looks pale !
How said the messenger who, from the fort
Islanded in the Danube, saw the battle
Of Bucharest ?—that—

Hassan. Ibrahim's scimitar
Drew with its gleam swift victory from heaven,
To burn before him in the night of battle—
A light and a destruction.

Mahmud. Ay, the day
Was ours ; but how ?

Hassan. The light Wallachians,
The Arnaut, Servian, and Albanian allies,
Fled from the glance of our artillery
Almost before the thunderstone alit ;
One half the Grecian army made a bridge
Of safe and slow retreat, with Moslem dead ;
The other—

Mahmud. Speak—tremble not—

Hassan. Islanded
By victor myriads, formed in hollow square
With rough and steadfast front, and thrice flung back
The deluge of our foaming cavalry ;
Thrice their keen wedge of battle pierced our lines.
Our baffled army trembled like one man
Before a host, and gave them space ; but soon
From the surrounding hills the batteries blazed,
Kneading them down with fire and iron rain.
Yet none approached ; till, like a field of corn
Under the hook of the swart sickleman,
The band, intrenched in mounds of Turkish dead,
Grew weak and few. Then said the Pacha, " Slaves,
Render yourselves—they have abandoned you—
What hope of refuge or retreat or aid ?
We grant your lives."—" Grant that which is thine own,"
Cried one, and fell upon his sword, and died.
Another—" God and man and hope abandon me ;
But I to them and to myself remain
Constant" ; he bowed his head, and his heart burst.
A third exclaimed : " There is a refuge, tyrant,

Where thou dar'st not pursue, and canst not harm
Shouldst thou pursue ; there we shall meet again : ”
Then held his breath, and after a brief spasm
The indignant spirit cast its mortal garment
Among the slain—dead earth upon the earth.
So these survivors, each by different ways,
Some strange, all sudden, none dishonourable,
Met in triumphant death. And, when our army
Closed in—while yet wonder and awe and shame
Held back the base hyænas of the battle
That feed upon the dead, and fly the living—
One rose out of the chaos of the slain.
And if it were a corpse which some dread spirit
Of the old saviours of the land we rule
Had lifted in its anger, wandering by ;
Or if there burned within the dying man
Unquenchable disdain of death, and faith
Creating what it feigned ; I cannot tell :
But he cried, “Phantoms of the free, we come !
Armies of the eternal, ye who strike
To dust the citadels of sanguine kings,
And shake the souls throned on their stony hearts,
And thaw their frostwork diadems like dew !
O ye who float around this clime, and weave
The garment of the glory which it wears ;
Whose fame, though earth betray the dust it clasped,
Lies sepulchred in monumental thought !
Progenitors of all that yet is great !
Ascribe to your bright senate, oh accept
In your high ministrations, us your sons—
Us first, and the more glorious yet to come !
And ye, weak conquerors ! giants who look pale
When the crushed worm rebels beneath your tread !
The vultures and the dogs, your pensioners tame,
Are overgorged ; but, like oppressors, still
They crave the relic of Destruction's feast.
The exhalations and the thirsty winds
Are sick with blood ; the dew is foul with death ;
Heaven's light is quenched in slaughter. Thus where'er
Upon your camps, cities, or towers, or fleets,
The obscene birds the reeking remnants cast
Of these dead limbs, upon your streams and mountains,

Upon your fields, your gardens, and your housetops,
 Where'er the winds shall creep, or the clouds fly,
 Or the dews fall, or the angry sun look down
 With poisoned light—Famine and Pestilence
 And Panic shall wage war upon our side.
 Nature from all her boundaries is moved
 Against ye : Time has found ye light as foam.
 The earth rebels ; and Good and Evil stake
 Their empire o'er the unborn world of men
 On this one cast. But, ere the die be thrown,
 The renovated genius of our race,
 Proud umpire of the impious game, descends,
 A seraph-wingèd Victory bestriding
 The tempest of the Omnipotence of God,
 Which sweeps all things to their appointed doom,
 And you to oblivion !"—More he would have said,
 But—

Mahmud. Died—as thou shouldst ere thy lips had painted
 Their ruin in the hues of our success !
 A rebel's crime, guilt with a rebel's tongue !
 Thy heart is Greek, Hassan.¹

Hassan. It may be so :
 A spirit not my own wrenched me within,
 And I have spoken words I fear and hate ;
 Yet would I die for—

Mahmud. Live ! oh live ! outlive
 Me and this sinking empire.—But the fleet—

Hassan. Alas !

Mahmud. The fleet which, like a flock of clouds
 Chased by the wind, flies the insurgent banner !
 Our wingèd castles from their merchant-ships !
 Our myriads before their weak pirate-bands !
 Our arms before their chains ! our years of empire
 Before their centuries of servile fear !
 Death is awake ! Repulse is on the waters !
 They own no more the thunder-bearing banner
 Of Mahmud ; but, like hounds of a base breed,
 Gorge from a stranger's hand, and rend their master.

Hassan. Latmos and Ampelos and Phanae saw
 The wreck—

Mahmud. The caves of the Icarian isles
 Told each to the other in loud mockery,

And with the tongue as of a thousand echoes,
First of the sea-convulsing fight—and then——
Thou darest to speak : senseless are the mountains,
Interpret thou their voice.

Hassan.

My presence bore
A part in that day's shame. The Grecian fleet
Bore down at daybreak from the north, and hung
As multitudinous on the ocean-line
As cranes upon the cloudless Thracian wind.
Our squadron, convoying ten-thousand men,
Was stretching toward Nauplia when the battle
Was kindled.—

First through the hail of our artillery
The agile Hydriote barks with press of sail
Dashed :—ship to ship, cannon to cannon, man
To man, were grappled in the embrace of war,
Inextricable but by death or victory.
The tempest of the raging fight convulsed
To its crystalline depths that stainless sea,
And shook heaven's roof of golden morning-clouds
Poised on an hundred azure mountain-isles.
In the brief trances of the artillery,
One cry from the destroyed and the destroyer
Rose, and a cloud of desolation wrapped
The unforeseen event, till the north wind
Sprung from the sea, lifting the heavy veil
Of battle-smoke—then "Victory—victory!"
For, as we thought, three frigates from Algiers
Bore down from Naxos to our aid. But soon
The abhorred cross glimmered behind, before,
Among, around us : and that fatal sign
Dried with its beams the strength in Moslem hearts,
As the sun drinks the dew.—What more? We fled!
Our noonday path over the sanguine foam
Was beacons (and the glare struck the sun pale)
By our consuming transports ; the fierce light
Made all the shadows of our sails blood-red,
And every countenance blank. Some ships lay feeding
The ravening fire even to the water's level ;
Some were blown up ; some, settling heavily,
Sunk ; and the shrieks of our companions died
Upon the wind that bore us fast and far,

Even after they were dead. Nine-thousand perished !
 We met the vultures, legioned in the air,
 Stemming the torrent of the tainted wind :
 They, screaming from their cloudy mountain-peaks,
 Stooped through the sulphurous battle-smoke, and perched
 Each on the weltering carcass that we loved,
 Like its ill angel or its damnèd soul,
 Riding upon the bosom of the sea.
 We saw the dogfish hastening to their feast.
 Joy waked the voiceless people of the sea ;
 And ravening Famine left his ocean-cave
 To dwell with War, with us, and with Despair.
 We met night three hours to the west of Patmos,
 And, with night, tempest—

Mahmud. Cease !

Enter a Messenger.

Messenger. Your Sublime Highness,
 That Christian hound the Muscovite Ambassador
 Has left the city. If the rebel fleet
 Had anchored in the port, had victory
 Crowned the Greek legions in the Hippodrome,
 Panic were tamer ! Obedience and Mutiny,
 Like giants in contention planet-struck,
 Stand gazing on each other.—There is peace
 In Stamboul.

Mahmud. Is the grave not calmer still ?
 Its ruins shall be mine !

Hassan. Fear not the Russian ;
 The tiger leagues not with the stag at bay
 Against the hunter. Cunning, base, and cruel,
 He crouches, watching till the spoil be won ;
 And must be paid for his reserve, in blood.
 After the war is fought, yield the sleek Russian
 That which thou canst not keep, his deserved portion
 Of blood, which shall not flow through streets and fields,
 Rivers and seas, like that which we may win,
 But stagnate in the veins of Christian slaves.

Enter Second Messenger.

Second Messenger. Nauplia, Tripolizza, Mothon, Athens,
 Navarin, Artas, Monembasia,
 Corinth, and Thebes, are carried by assault ;
 And every Islamite who made his dogs

Fat with the flesh of Galilean slaves
 Passed at the edge of the sword. The lust of blood,
 Which made our warriors drunk, is quenched in death ;
 But like a fiery plague breaks out anew
 In deeds which make the Christian cause look pale
 In its own light. The garrison of Patras
 Has store but for ten days, nor is there hope
 But from the Briton. At once slave and tyrant,
 His wishes still are weaker than his fears,
 Or he would sell what faith may yet remain
 From the oaths broke in Genoa and in Norway ;
 And, if you buy him not, your treasury
 Is empty even of promises—his own coin.
 The freedman of a western poet-chief
 Holds Attica with seven-thousand rebels,
 And has beat back the Pacha of Negropont.
 The aged Ali sits in Yanina,
 A crownless metaphor of empire ;
 His name, that shadow of his withered might,
 Holds our besieging army, like a spell,
 In prey to famine, pest, and mutiny :
 He, bastioned in his citadel, looks forth
 Joyless upon the sapphire lake that mirrors
 The ruins of the city where he reigned,
 Childless and sceptreless. The Greek has reaped
 The costly harvest his own blood matured,—
 Not the sower, Ali, who has bought a truce
 From Ypsilanti, with ten camel-loads
 Of Indian gold.

Enter a Third Messenger.

Mahmud. What more?

Third Messenger. The Christian tribes
 Of Lebanon and the Syrian wilderness
 Are in revolt ; Damascus, Hems, Aleppo,
 Tremble ; the Arab menaces Medina ;
 The Ethiop has entrenched himself in Sennaar,
 And keeps the Egyptian rebel well employed,
 Who denies homage, claims investiture
 As price of tardy aid. Persia demands
 The cities on the Tigris, and the Georgians
 Refuse their living tribute. Crete and Cyprus,
 Like mountain-twins that from each other's veins

Catch the volcano-fire and earthquake-spasm,
 Shake in the general fever. Through the city,
 Like birds before a storm, the Santons shriek,
 And prophesyings horrible and new
 Are heard among the crowd ; that sea of men
 Sleeps on the wrecks it made, breathless and still.
 A Dervise learned in the koran preaches
 That it is written how the sins of Islam
 Must raise-up a destroyer even now.
 The Greeks expect a Saviour from the west ;
 Who shall not come, men say, in clouds and glory,
 But in the omnipresence of that Spirit
 In which all live and are. Ominous signs
 Are blazoned broadly on the noonday sky.
 One saw a red cross stamped upon the sun ;
 It has rained blood ; and monstrous births declare
 The secret wrath of Nature and her Lord.
 The army encamped upon the Cydaris
 Was roused last night by the alarm of battle,
 And saw two hosts conflicting in the air,—
 The shadows doubtless of the unborn time
 Cast on the mirror of the night : while yet
 The fight hung balanced, there arose a storm
 Which swept the phantoms from among the stars.
 At the third watch, the Spirit of the Plague
 Was heard abroad flapping among the tents :
 Those who relieved watch found the sentinels dead.
 The last news from the camp is that a thousand
 Have sickened, and—

Enter a Fourth Messenger.

Mahmud. And thou, pale ghost, dim shadow
 Of some untimely rumour, speak !

Fourth Messenger. One comes
 Fainting with toil, covered with foam and blood.
 He stood, he says, upon Chelonites'
 Promontory, which o'erlooks the isles that groan
 Under the Briton's frown, and all their waters
 Then trembling in the splendour of the moon ;
 When, as the wandering clouds unveiled or hid
 Her boundless light, he saw two adverse fleets
 Stalk through the night in the horizon's glimmer,
 Mingling fierce thunders and sulphureous gleams,

And smoke which strangled every infant wind
 That soothed the silver clouds through the deep air.
 At length the battle slept. But the Sirocco
 Awoke, and drove his flock of thunder-clouds
 Over the sea-horizon, blotting out
 All objects—save that in the faint moon-glimpse
 He saw, or dreamed he saw, the Turkish admiral,
 And two the loftiest of our ships of war,
 With the bright image of that Queen of Heaven,
 Who hid perhaps her face for grief, reversed ;
 And the abhorred cross—

Enter an Attendant.

Attendant. Your Sublime Highness,
 The Jew who—

Mahmud. Could not come more seasonably :
 Bid him attend.—I'll hear no more. Too long
 We gaze on danger through the mist of fear,
 And multiply upon our shattered hopes
 The images of ruin. Come what will !
 Tomorrow and tomorrow are as lamps
 Set in our path to light us to the edge,
 Through rough and smooth ; nor can we suffer aught
 Which He inflicts not in whose hand we are. [*Exeunt.*]

SEMICHORUS I.

Would I were the wingèd cloud
 Of a tempest swift and loud !

I would scorn

The smile of morn,

And the wave where the moonrise is born :

I would leave

The Spirits of Eve

A shroud for the corpse of the Day to weave

From other threads than mine.

Bask in the deep-blue noon divine

Who would? Not I !

SEMICHORUS II.

Whither to fly ?

SEMICHORUS I.

Where the rocks that gird the Ægean
 Echo to the battle-pæan

Of the free,
 I would flee
 A tempestuous herald of victory !
 My golden rain
 For the Grecian slain
 Should mingle in tears with the bloody main ;
 And my solemn thunder-knell
 Should ring to the world the passing-bell
 Of tyranny !

SEMICHORUS II.

Ah king ! wilt thou chain
 The rack and the rain ?
 Wilt thou fetter the lightning and hurricane ?
 The storms are free ;
 But we !

CHORUS.

O Slavery ! thou frost of the world's prime,
 Killing its flowers and leaving its thorns bare,
 Thy touch has stamped these limbs with crime,
 These brows thy branding garland bear ;
 But the free heart, the impassive soul,
 Scorn thy control !

SEMICHORUS I.

" Let there be light !" said Liberty ;
 And, like sunrise from the sea,
 Athens arose !—Around her born,
 Shone, like mountains in the morn,
 Glorious states ;—and are they now
 Ashes, wrecks, oblivion ?

SEMICHORUS II.

Go

Where Thermæ and Asopus swallowed
 Persia, as the sand does foam.
 Deluge upon deluge followed,
 Discord, Macedon, and Rome ;
 And lastly thou !

SEMICHORUS I.

Temples and towers,
Citadels and marts, and they
Who live and die there, have been ours,
And may be thine, and must decay.
But Greece and her foundations are
Built below the tide of war,
Based on the crystalline sea
Of thought and its eternity.
Her citizens, imperial spirits,
Rule the present from the past ;
On all this world of men inherits
Their seal is set.

SEMICHORUS II.

Hear ye the blast
Whose Orphic thunder thrilling calls
From ruin her Titanian walls—
Whose spirit shakes the sapless bones
Of Slavery ? Argos, Corinth, Crete,
Hear, and from their mountain-thrones
The dæmons and the nymphs repeat
The harmony.

SEMICHORUS I.

I hear ! I hear !

SEMICHORUS II.

The world's eyeless charioteer,
Destiny, is hurrying by !
What faith is crushed, what empire bleeds.
Beneath her earthquake-footed steeds ?
What eagle-winged Victory sits
At her right hand ? what Shadow flits
Before ? what Splendour rolls behind ?
Ruin and Renovation cry,
" Who but we ? "

SEMICHORUS I.

I hear— I hear—
The hiss as of a rushing wind,

The roar as of an ocean foaming,
The thunder as of earthquake coming !

I hear—I hear—

The crash as of an empire falling,
The shrieks as of a people calling
"Mercy! Mercy!"—how they thrill!
Then a shout of "Kill! kill! kill!"
And then a small still voice, thus—

SEMICHORUS II.

For

Revenge and Wrong bring forth their kind :
The foul cubs like their parents are ;
Their den is in the guilty mind,
And Conscience feeds them with despair.

SEMICHORUS I.

In sacred Athens, near the fane
Of Wisdom, Pity's altar stood.
Serve not the Unknown God in vain ;
But pay that broken shrine again
Love for hate, and tears for blood.

Enter MAHMUD *and* AHASUERUS.

Mahmud. Thou art a man, thou sayest, even as we.
Ahasuerus. No more.

Mahmud. But raised above thy fellow-men
By thought, as I by power.

Ahasuerus. Thou sayest so.

Mahmud. Thou art an adept in the difficult lore
Of Greek and Frank philosophy. Thou numberest
The flowers, and thou measurest the stars ;
Thou severest element from element ;
Thy spirit is present in the past, and sees
The birth of this old world through all its cycles
Of desolation and of loveliness ;
And when man was not, and how man became
The monarch and the slave of this low sphere,
And all its narrow circles. It is much.
I honour thee, and would be what thou art
Were I not what I am. But the unborn hour,
Cradled in fear and hope, conflicting storms,
Who shall unveil ? Nor thou, nor I, nor any

Mighty or wise. I apprehended not
What thou hast taught me, but I now perceive
That thou art no interpreter of dreams ;
Thou dost not own that art, device, or God,
Can make the future present—let it come !
Moreover thou disdainest us and ours.
Thou art as God, whom thou contemplatest.

Ahasuerus. Disdain thee ?—not the worm beneath thy feet !
The Fathomless has care for meaner things
Than thou canst dream, and has made pride for those
Who would be what they may not, or would seem
That which they are not. Sultan, talk no more
Of thee and me, the future and the past ;
But look on that which cannot change—the One,
The unborn and the undying. Earth and ocean,
Space, and the isles of life or light that gem
The sapphire floods of interstellar air,
This firmament pavilioned upon chaos,
With all its cressets of immortal fire,
Whose outwall, bastioned impregnably
Against the escape of boldest thoughts, repels them
As Calpe the Atlantic clouds—this whole
Of suns and worlds and men and beasts and flowers,
With all the silent or tempestuous workings
By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
Is but a vision ;—all that it inherits
Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles and dreams.
Thought is its cradle and its grave ; nor less
The future and the past are idle shadows
Of thought's eternal flight—they have no being ;
Nought is but that which feels itself to be.

Mahmud. What meanest thou ? thy words stream like a
tempest
Of dazzling mist within my brain—they shake
The earth on which I stand, and hang like night
On heaven above me. What can they avail ?
They cast on all things surest, brightest, best,
Doubt, insecurity, astonishment.

Ahasuerus. Mistake me not. All is contained in each.
Dodona's forest to an acorn's cup
Is that which has been or will be to that
Which is—the absent to the present. Thought

Alone, and its quick elements, will, passion,
Reason, imagination, cannot die ;
They are what that which they regard appears,
The stuff whence mutability can weave
All that it hath dominion o'er,—worlds, worms,
Empires, and superstitions. What has thought
To do with time or place or circumstance ?
Wouldst thou behold the future ? Ask and have ;
Knock, and it shall be opened :—look, and lo !
The coming age is shadowed on the past,
As on a glass.

Mahmud. Wild, wilder thoughts convulse
My spirit !—Did not Mahomet the Second
Win Stamboul ?

Ahasuerus. Thou wouldst ask that giant spirit
The written fortunes of thy house and faith.
Thou wouldst cite one out of the grave to tell
How what was born in blood must die.

Mahmud. Thy words
Have power on me ! I see——

Ahasuerus. What hearest thou ?

Mahmud. A far whisper——
Terrible silence.

Ahasuerus. What succeeds ?

Mahmud. The sound
As of the assault of an imperial city ;
The hiss of inextinguishable fire ;
The roar of giant cannon ; the earthquaking
Fall of vast bastions and precipitous towers ;
The shock of crags shot from strange enginry ;
The clash of wheels, and clang of armèd hoofs,
And crash of brazen mail, as of the wreck
Of adamantine mountains ; the mad blast
Of trumpets, and the neigh of raging steeds ;
And shrieks of women whose thrill jars the blood ;
And one sweet laugh, most horrible to hear,
As of a joyous infant waked, and playing
With its dead mother's breast :—and now more loud
The mingled battle-cry—ha ! hear I not
“*Ev τούτῳ νίκη*”—“Allah-illa-Allah” ?

Ahasuerus. The sulphurous mist is raised—thou seest—

Mahmud. A chasm

As of two mountains, in the wall of Stamboul ;
 And in that ghastly breach the Islamites,
 Like giants on the ruins of a world,
 Stand in the light of sunrise. In the dust
 Glimmers a kingless diadem, and one
 Of regal port has cast himself beneath
 The stream of war. Another, proudly clad
 In golden arms, spurs a Tartarian barb
 Into the gap, and with his iron mace
 Directs the torrent of that tide of men,—
 And seems—he *is*—Mahomet !

Ahasuerus.

What thou seest

Is but the ghost of thy forgotten dream ;
 A dream itself,—yet less, perhaps, than that
 Thou call'st reality. Thou mayst behold
 How cities on which Empire sleeps enthroned
 Bow their towered crests to mutability.
 Poised by the flood, e'en on the height thou holdest,
 Thou mayst now learn how the full tide of power
 Ebbs to its depths.—Inheritor of glory,
 Conceived in darkness, born in blood, and nourished
 With tears and toil, thou seest the mortal throes
 Of that whose birth was but the same. The past
 Now stands before thee like an incarnation
 Of the to-come. Yet, wouldst thou commune with
 That portion of thyself which was ere thou
 Didst start for this brief race whose crown is death,—
 Dissolve, with that strong faith and fervent passion
 Which called it from the uncreated deep,
 Yon cloud of war with its tempestuous phantoms
 Of raging death ; and draw with mighty will
 The Imperial Shade hither.

[*Exit AHASUERUS. THE PHANTOM OF MAHOMET THE
 SECOND appears.*]

Mahmud.

Approach !

Phantom.

I come

Thence whither thou must go. The grave is fitter
 To take the living than give up the dead ;
 Yet has thy faith prevailed, and I am here.
 The heavy fragments of the power which fell
 When I arose, like shapeless crags and clouds,
 Hang round my throne on the abyss, and voices

Of strange lament soothe my supreme repose,
 Wailing for glory never to return.
 A later empire nods in its decay ;
 The autumn of a greener faith is come ;
 And wolfish change, like winter, howls to strip
 The foliage in which fame, the eagle, built
 Her aerie, while dominion whelped below.
 The storm is in its branches, and the frost
 Is on its leaves, and the blank deep expects
 Oblivion on oblivion, spoil on spoil,
 Ruin on ruin. Thou art slow, my son.
 The anarchs of the world of darkness keep
 A throne for thee, round which thine empire lies
 Boundless and mute ; and, for thy subjects, thou,
 Like us, shalt rule the ghosts of murdered life,
 The phantoms of the powers who rule thee now—
 Mutinous passions, and conflicting fears,
 And hopes that sate themselves on dust, and die,
 Stripped of their mortal strength, as thou of thine.
 Islam must fall ; but we will reign together
 Over its ruins in the world of death :—
 And, if the trunk be dry, yet shall the seed
 Unfold itself even in the shape of that
 Which gathers birth in its decay. Woe, woe
 To the weak people tangled in the grasp
 Of its last spasms !

Mahmud. Spirit, woe to all !

Woe to the wronged and the avenger ! woe
 To the destroyer, woe to the destroyed !
 Woe to the dupe, and woe to the deceiver !
 Woe to the oppressed, and woe to the oppressor !
 Woe both to those that suffer and inflict,—
 Those who are born, and those who die ! But say,
 Imperial shadow of the thing I am,
 When, how, by whom, Destruction must accomplish
 Her consummation ?

Phantom. Ask the cold pale Hour,

Rich in reversion of impending death,
 When he shall fall upon whose ripe grey hairs
 Sit care and sorrow and infirmity—
 The weight which Crime, whose wings are plumed with years,
 Leaves in his flight from ravaged heart to heart

Over the heads of men, under which burden
 They bow themselves unto the grave. Fond wretch !
 He leans upon his crutch, and talks of years
 To come, and how in hours of youth renewed
 He will renew lost joys, and——

Voice without.

Victory ! victory !

[*The PHANTOM vanishes.*

Mahmud. What sound of the importunate earth has broken
 My mighty trance ?

Voice without. Victory ! victory ! [smile

Mahmud. Weak lightning before darkness ! poor faint
 Of dying Islam ! voice which art the response
 Of hollow weakness !—Do I wake and live ?
 Were there such things ? or may the unquiet brain,
 Vexed by the wise mad talk of the old Jew,
 Have shaped itself these shadows of its fear ?
 It matters not !—for nought we see or dream,
 Possess, or lose, or grasp at, can be worth
 More than it gives or teaches. Come what may,
 The future must become the past ; and I,
 As they were to whom once this present hour,
 This gloomy crag of time to which I cling,
 Seemed an elysian isle of peace and joy
 Never to be attained.—I must rebuke
 This drunkenness of triumph ere it die,
 And, dying, bring despair.—“Victory !”—Poor slaves !

[*Exit MAHMUD.*

Voice without. Shout in the jubilee of death ! The Greeks
 Are as a brood of lions in the net,
 Round which the kingly hunters of the earth
 Stand smiling ! Anarchs, ye whose daily food
 Are curses, groans, and gold, the fruit of death,
 From Thule to the girdle of the world,
 Come, feast ! The board groans with the flesh of men—
 The cup is foaming with a nation's blood—
 Famine and Thirst await : eat, drink, and die !

SEMICHORUS I.

Victorious Wrong with vulture scream
 Salutes the risen sun, pursues the flying day !
 I saw her, ghastly as a tyrant's dream,
 Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,

Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned lay
 In visions of the dawning undelight.
 Who shall impede her flight?
 Who rob her of her prey?

Voice without. Victory! victory! Russia's famished eagles
 Dare not to prey beneath the crescent's light!—
 Impale the remnant of the Greeks! despoil!
 Violate! make their flesh cheaper than dust!

SEMICHORUS II.

Thou voice which art
 The herald of the ill in splendour hid!
 Thou echo of the hollow heart
 Of Monarchy! bear me to thine abode
 When desolation flashes o'er a world destroyed.
 Oh bear me to those isles of jagged cloud
 Which float like mountains on the earthquake mid
 The momentary oceans of the lightning;
 Or to some toppling promontory proud
 Of solid tempest, whose black pyramid,
 Riven, overhangs the founts intensely bright'ning
 Of those dawn-tinted deluges of fire,
 Before their waves expire,
 When heaven and earth are light, and only light,
 In the thunder-night!

Voice without. Victory! victory! Austria, Russia, England,
 And that tame serpent, that poor shadow, France,
 Cry peace; and that means death when monarchs speak.
 Ho there! bring torches, sharpen those red stakes!
 These chains are light, fitter for slaves and poisoners
 Than Greeks!—Kill! plunder! burn! let none remain!

SEMICHORUS I.

Alas for Liberty,
 If numbers, wealth, or unfulfilling years,
 Or fate, can quell the free!
 Alas for Virtue, when
 Torments, or contumely, or the sneers
 Of erring-judging men,
 Can break the heart where it abides!
 Alas if Love, whose smile makes this obscure world splendid,

Can change, with its false times and tides,
 Like hope and terror—
 Alas for Love !
 And Truth, who wanderest lone and unbefriended,
 If thou canst veil thy lie-consuming mirror
 Before the dazzled eyes of Error,
 Alas for thee, image of the Above !

SEMICHORUS II.

Repulse, with plumes from Conquest torn,
 Led the Ten-thousand from the limits of the morn
 Through many an hostile anarchy :
 At length they wept aloud and cried "The sea ! the sea !" —
 Through exile, persecution, and despair,
 Rome was—and young Atlantis shall become—
 The wonder, or the terror, or the tomb,
 Of all whose step wakes Power lulled in her savage lair.
 But Greece was as a hermit child
 Whose fairest thoughts and limbs were built
 To woman's growth by dreams so mild
 She knew not pain or guilt.
 And now . . . O Victory, blush ! and Empire, tremble !
 When ye desert the free.
 If Greece must be
 A wreck, yet shall its fragments re-assemble,
 And build themselves again impregnably
 In a diviner clime,
 To Amphionic music, on some cape sublime
 Which frowns above the idle foam of time.

SEMICHORUS I.

Let the tyrants rule the desert they have made ;
 Let the free possess the paradise they claim ;
 Be the fortune of our fierce oppressors weighed
 With our ruin, our resistance, and our name !

SEMICHORUS II.

Our dead shall be the seed of their decay,
 Our survivors be the shadow of their pride ;
 Our adversity a dream to pass away,
 Their dishonour a remembrance to abide.

Voice without. Victory ! victory ! The bought Briton sends
 The keys of ocean to the Islamite.

Now shall the blazon of the cross be veiled,
And British skill directing Othman might
Thunder-strike rebel victory. Oh keep holy
This jubilee of unrevengèd blood !
Kill ! crush ! despoil ! Let not a Greek escape !

SEMICHORUS I.

Darkness has dawned in the east
On the noon of time :
The death-birds descend to their feast
From the hungry clime.
Let Freedom and Peace flee far
To a sunnier strand,
And follow Love's folding-star
To the evening land.

SEMICHORUS II.

The young moon has fed
Her exhausted horn
With the sunset's fire ;
The weak day is dead,
But the night is not born ;
And, like loveliness panting with wild desire
While it trembles with fear and delight,
Hesperus flies from awakening night,
And pants in its beauty and speed with light
Fast-flashing, soft, and bright.
Thou beacon of love ! thou lamp of the free !
Guide us far far away
To climes where now, veiled by the ardour of day,
Thou art hidden
From waves on which weary Noon
Faints in her summer swoon,
Between kingless continents sinless as Eden,
Around mountains and islands inviolably
Pranked on the sapphire sea.

SEMICHORUS I.

Through the sunset of hope,
Like the shapes of a dream,
What paradise islands of glory gleam !
Beneath heaven's cope,
Their shadows more clear float by :

The sound of their oceans, the light of their sky,
The music and fragrance their solitudes breathe,
Burst like morning on dream, or like heaven on death,

Through the walls of our prison ;—
And Greece, which was dead, is arisen !

CHORUS.

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn :
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far ;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning star ;
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize ;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies ;
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be—
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free,
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime ;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than one who rose,
Than many unsubdued:
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

Oh cease ! must hate and death return ?
Cease ! must men kill and die ?
Cease ! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy !
The world is weary of the past,—
Oh might it die or rest at last !

SHELLEY'S NOTES ON HELLAS.

P. 388.

The quenchless ashes of Milan.

MILAN was the centre of the resistance of the Lombard League against the Austrian tyrant. Frederick Barbarossa burnt the city to the ground; but liberty lived in its ashes, and it rose like an exhalation from its ruin.—See Sismondi's *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes*, a book which has done much towards awakening the Italians to an imitation of their great ancestors.

P. 391.

Chorus.

The popular notions of christianity are represented in this chorus as true in their relation to the worship they superseded, and that which in all probability they will supersede, without considering their merits in a relation more universal. The first stanza contrasts the immortality of the living and thinking beings which inhabit the planets, and (to use a common and inadequate phrase) clothe themselves in matter, with the transience of the noblest manifestations of the external world. The concluding verses indicate a progressive state of more or less exalted existence, according to the degree of perfection which every distinct intelligence may have attained.

Let it not be supposed that I mean to dogmatize upon a subject concerning which all men are equally ignorant, or that I think the Gordian knot of the origin of evil can be disentangled by that or any similar assertions. The received hypothesis of a Being resembling men in the moral attributes of his nature having called us out of non-existence, who, after inflicting on us the misery of the commission of error, should superadd that of the punishment and the privations consequent upon it, still would remain inexplicable and incredible. That there is a true solution of the riddle, and that in our present state that solution is unattainable by us, are propositions which may be regarded as equally certain; meanwhile, as it is the province of the poet to attach himself to those ideas which exalt and ennoble humanity, let him be permitted to have conjectured the condition of that futurity towards which we are all impelled by an inextinguishable thirst for immortality. Until better arguments can be produced than sophisms which disgrace the cause, this desire itself must remain the strongest and the only presumption that eternity is the inheritance of every thinking being.

P. 393.

No hoary priests after that Patriarch.

The Greek Patriarch, after having been compelled to fulminate an anathema against the insurgents, was put to death by the Turks.

Fortunately the Greeks have been taught that they cannot buy security by degradation; and the Turks, though equally cruel, are less cunning than the smooth-faced tyrants of Europe.

As to the anathema, his Holiness might as well have thrown his mitre at Mount Athos, for any effect that it produced. The chiefs of the Greeks are almost all men of comprehension and enlightened views on religion and politics.

P. 401.

The freedman of a western poet-chief.

A Greek who had been Lord Byron's servant commands the insurgents in Attica. This Greek, Lord Byron informs me, though a poet and an enthusiastic patriot, gave him rather the idea of a timid and unenterprising person. It appears that circumstances make men what they are, and that we all contain the germ of a degree of degradation or of greatness whose connection with our character is determined by events.

P. 402.

The Greeks expect a Saviour from the west.

It is reported that this Messiah had arrived at a seaport near Lacedæmon in an American brig. The association of names and ideas is irresistibly ludicrous, but the prevalence of such a rumour strongly marks the state of popular enthusiasm in Greece.

P. 408.

*The sound**As of the assault of an imperial city.*

For the vision of Mahmud of the taking of Constantinople in 1453,¹ see Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. xii. p. 223.

The manner of the invocation of the spirit of Mahomet the Second will be censured as over-subtle. I could easily have made the Jew a regular conjuror, and the Phantom an ordinary ghost. I have preferred to represent the Jew as disclaiming all pretension, or even belief in supernatural agency, and as tempting Mahmud to that state of mind in which ideas may be supposed to assume the force of sensations, through the confusion of thought with the objects of thought, and the excess of passion animating the creations of imagination.

It is a sort of natural magic, susceptible of being exercised in a degree by any one who should have made himself master of the secret associations of another's thoughts.

P. 415.

Chorus.

The final chorus is indistinct and obscure as the event of the living drama whose arrival it foretells.

Prophecies of wars, and rumours of wars, &c., may safely be made by poet or prophet in any age; but to anticipate, however darkly, a period of regeneration and happiness, is a more hazardous exercise of the faculty which bards possess or feign. It will remind the reader, "*magno nec proximus intervallo*," of Isaiah and Virgil; whose ardent spirits, overleaping the actual reign of evil which we endure and bewail, already saw the possible and perhaps approaching state of society in which the "lion shall lie down with the lamb," and "*omnis feret omnia tellus*." Let these great names be my authority and my excuse.

P. 416.

*Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst.*

Saturn and Love were among the deities of a real or imaginary state of innocence and happiness. All those *who fell*, or the gods of Greece, Asia, and Egypt; the *one who rose*, or Jesus Christ, at whose appearance the idols of the pagan world were amerced of their worship; and the *many unsubdued*, or the monstrous objects of the idolatry of China, India, the Antarctic islands, and the native tribes of America; certainly have reigned over the understandings of men in conjunction or in succession, during periods in which all we know of evil has been in a state of portentous, and, until the revival of learning and the arts, perpetually increasing, activity. The Grecian gods seem indeed to have been personally more innocent; although it cannot be said that, as far as temperance and chastity are concerned, they gave so edifying an example as their successor. The sublime human character of Jesus Christ was deformed by an imputed identification with a power who tempted, betrayed, and punished, the innocent beings who were called into existence by his sole will; and, for the period of a thousand years, the spirit of this most just, wise, and benevolent of men has been propitiated with myriads of hecatombs of those who approached the nearest to his innocence and wisdom, sacrificed under every aggravation of atrocity, and variety of torture. The horrors of the Mexican, the Peruvian, and the Indian superstitions are well known.

NOTE ON HELLAS, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

THE South of Europe was in a state of great political excitement at the beginning of the year 1821. The Spanish Revolution had been a signal to Italy; secret societies were formed; and, when Naples rose to declare the Constitution, the call was responded to from Brundisium to the foot of the Alps. To crush these attempts to obtain liberty, early in 1821 the Austrians poured their armies into the Peninsula: at first their coming rather seemed to add energy and resolution to a people long enslaved. The Piedmontese asserted their freedom; Genoa threw off the yoke of the King of Sardinia; and, as if in playful imitation, the people of the little state of Massa and Carrara gave the *congé* to their sovereign, and set up a republic.

Tuscany alone was perfectly tranquil. It was said that the Austrian minister presented a list of sixty Carbonari to the Grand Duke, urging their imprisonment; and the Grand Duke replied, "I do not know whether these sixty men are Carbonari, but I know, if I imprison them, I shall directly have sixty-thousand start up." But, though the Tuscans had no desire to disturb the paternal government beneath whose shelter they slumbered, they regarded the progress of the various Italian revolutions with intense interest, and hatred for the Austrian was warm in every bosom. But they had slender hopes; they knew that the Neapolitans would offer no fit resistance to the regular German troops, and that the overthrow of the constitution in Naples would act as a decisive blow against all struggles for liberty in Italy.

We have seen the rise and progress of reform. But the Holy Alliance was alive and active in those days, and few could dream of the peaceful triumph of liberty. It seemed then that the armed assertion of freedom in the South of Europe was the only hope of the liberals, as, if it prevailed, the nations of the north would imitate the example. Happily the reverse has proved the fact. The countries accustomed to the exercise of the privileges of freemen, to a limited extent, have extended, and are extending, these limits. Freedom and knowledge have now a chance of proceeding hand in hand; and, if it continue thus, we may hope for the durability of both. Then, as I have said—in 1821—Shelley, as well as every other lover of liberty, looked upon the struggles in Spain and Italy as decisive of the destinies of the world, probably for centuries to come. The interest he took in the progress of affairs was intense. When Genoa declared itself free, his hopes were at their highest. Day after day he read the bulletins of the Austrian army, and sought eagerly to gather tokens of its defeat. He heard of the revolt of Genoa with emotions of transport. His whole heart and soul were in the triumph of the cause. We were living at Pisa at that time; and several well-informed Italians, at the head of whom we may place the celebrated Vaccà, were accustomed to seek for sympathy in their hopes from Shelley: they did not find such for the despair they too generally experienced, founded on contempt for their southern countrymen.

While the fate of the progress of the Austrian armies then invading Naples was yet in suspense, the news of another revolution filled him with exultation. We had formed the acquaintance at Pisa of several Constantinopolitan Greeks, of the family of Prince Caradja, formerly Hospodar of Wallachia; who, hearing that the bowstring, the accustomed finale of his vicerealty, was on the road to him, escaped with his treasures, and took up his abode in Tuscany. Among these was the gentleman to whom the drama of *Hellas* is dedicated. Prince Mavrocordato was warmed by those aspirations for the independence of his country which filled the hearts of many of his countrymen. He often intimated the possibility of an insurrection in Greece; but we had no idea of its being so near at hand, when, on the 1st of April 1821, he called on Shelley, bringing the proclamation of his cousin, Prince Ypsilanti, and, radiant with exultation and delight, declared that henceforth Greece would be free.

Shelley had hymned the dawn of liberty in Spain and Naples, in two odes dictated by the warmest enthusiasm; he felt himself naturally impelled to decorate

with poetry the uprise of the descendants of that people whose works he regarded with deep admiration, and to adopt the vaticinatory character in prophesying their success. *Hellas* was written in a moment of enthusiasm. It is curious to remark how well he overcomes the difficulty of forming a drama out of such scant materials. His prophecies, indeed, came true in their general, not their particular, purport. He did not foresee the death of Lord Londonderry, which was to be the epoch of a change in English politics, particularly as regarded foreign affairs; nor that the navy of his country would fight for instead of against the Greeks, and by the battle of Navarino secure their enfranchisement from the Turks. Almost against reason, as it appeared to him, he resolved to believe that Greece would prove triumphant; and in this spirit, auguring ultimate good, yet grieving over the vicissitudes to be endured in the interval, he composed his drama.

Hellas was among the last of his compositions, and is among the most beautiful. The choruses are singular imaginative, and melodious in their versification. There are some stanzas that beautifully exemplify Shelley's peculiar style; as, for instance, the assertion of the intellectual empire which must be for ever the inheritance of the country of Homer, Sophocles, and Plato:

But Greece and her foundations are
Built below the tide of war;
Based on the crystalline sea
Of thought and its eternity.

And again, that philosophical truth felicitously imaged forth—

Revenge and Wrong bring forth their kind:
The foul cubs like their parents are;
Their den is in the guilty mind,
And Conscience feeds them with despair.

The conclusion of the last chorus is among the most beautiful of his lyrics. The imagery is distinct and majestic; the prophecy, such as poets love to dwell upon, the Regeneration of Mankind—and that regeneration reflecting back splendour on the foregone time, from which it inherits so much of intellectual wealth, and memory of past virtuous deeds, as must render the possession of happiness and peace of tenfold value.

NOTES BY W. M. ROSSETTI.

P. 1.

"A measure which only pretends to be regular."

In the original edition of *Rosalind and Helen*, the setting of the verses is uniform throughout, as if the metre were also uniform: it may partly be to this that Shelley alludes. In our present text, the same system as in all the other poems has been pursued—that of indicating, by the variation of setting, the diversities of rhythm and rhyme. Another point which Shelley probably referred to is the frequent irregularity of the rhyming—many lines, for instance, being left without any rhyme at all. The author having given this general caveat, I shall not pause over each particular instance.—The somewhat slighting estimate which Shelley has recorded in this notice of *Rosalind and Helen* corresponds with an expression in one of his letters (6th April 1819) to Mr. Peacock. "I lay no stress on it, one way or the other. The concluding lines are natural."

P. 1.

"I do not know which of the few scattered poems I left in England will be selected by my bookseller to add to this collection."

The poems thus added were in fact the *Lines written among the Euganean Hills*, *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, and *Ozymandias*.

P. 2.

"Shapes which seem

"Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream."

Mr. Fleay, in order to obtain a rhyme to the soon ensuing word "now," suggests to read "show," instead of "seem." It is a capital suggestion; though I think most likely Shelley wrote "seem" advisedly, and left "now" to take care of itself. This is but one out of many emendations proposed by Mr. Fleay for the avoidance of recurrences of rhymelessness.

P. 3.

"A sound from *there*, Rosalind dear."

In previous editions, as also in an extant MS. of the poem (as named in the *Westminster Review*), this stands "A sound from *thee*": of which I can make no right sense. "*There*" seems to render the whole passage consistent, and I can hardly (notwithstanding the MS., in which a slip of the pen is highly conceivable) doubt its being correct. Helen objects to sit on the stone indicated by Rosalind, because she cannot bear the murmur of the lake, which is audible at that spot. A sound "from *there*" [from the lake] comes reminding her too painfully of similar sounds heard in their own country. This fairly corresponds with what Helen had said in her first speech:

"That our land; . . .

: : that *inland stream*,

And the blue mountains, shapes which seem

Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream;"

but more especially Helen may be thinking of the sounds of her seaside home in Lionel's last days.

P. 6.

"And the bright boy beside her feet
Now *lay*, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her;
Now where some sudden impulse calls
Followed."

The final word has, in previous editions, been "*following*." This is obviously a syntactical slip—and indeed stultifies the whole clause. It represents that the boy lay down: and, *while thus lying*, he sometimes lifted his eyes, and sometimes followed where some sudden impulse called. It is quite manifest that the true antithesis is not between two participles, "*lifting*" and "*following*"; but between two preterits, "*lay*" and "*followed*."

P. 8.

"In morning's light, in evening's gloom," &c.

This account of how Rosalind haunted her husband's tomb for (apparently) days together, and how their children triumphed audibly in his death, is inconsistent with what we find at pp. 13 to 15.

P. 9.

"The babe at my bosom was hushed with fear
If it thought it heard its father near;
And my two wild boys would near my knee
Cling, cowed and cowering fearfully."

This is another inconsistency. We find on p. 12 ("Since *she* who first" &c.) that the firstborn child was a girl, and that there were three children altogether: there could not then have been "two wild *boys*" along with an unweaned baby. The only way of reconciling the statements would be to assume that the fear of the "babe" took place at one time, and that of the two boys at another time: but I cannot suppose that Shelley meant this.

P. 9.

"*In* the fourth, my gentle mother."

We should all say "*In* the fourth year"; not "*On* the fourth," as in the original text.

P. 9.

"The youth upon the pavement fell."

This is one of the lines left rhymeless. Perhaps it should be "*rolled*" instead of "*fell*." Or it might be still better to adopt Mr. Fleay's proposal, and obtain a quasi-rhyme to "*fell*" by inverting the epithets in a preceding line, and reading

"I am now weak and *old and pale*."

P. 11.

"And down my cheeks the quick tears *fell*."

The original gives "*ran*" instead of "*fell*"; and then, in the penultimate line of the paragraph, comes the final word "*tell*." Neither "*ran*" nor "*tell*" has any rhyme: we may therefore without rashness conclude that Shelley did not mean to write "*ran*," but "*fell*." This also, I find, had been suggested by Mr. Fleay.

P. 12.

"The seal of that Lethean spring . . ."

I have introduced the . . . ; previous editions give a semicolon. It will be observed that this word "*spring*" has no rhyme: which fact, coupled with the incompleteness of the sentence, might suggest that a line has dropped out in

printing. There can be little doubt that what Shelley meant Rosalind to say was something to this effect: "My babes weaned me from the thirst of death; which all the grief and shame that I had undergone (since my first daughter's birth withheld me from the grave) *had again made me long for.*" But apparently Shelley's MS. was defective; for a letter from Mr. Peacock to the publisher, Mr. Ollier, has been seen by me, pointing out the imperfection, as the proofs were passing through Peacock's hands. This letter, with many other Shelley documents once belonging to Mr. Ollier, was sold by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson on 19th July 1877.

P. 18.

"With their victim's pain the torturers."

Mr. Fleay proposes to read the line thus, so as to avoid the rhymelessness of the line hitherto printed:

"The torturers with their victim's pain."

P. 20.

"With which they drag from *mines of gore*
The chains their slaves yet ever wore."

"Mines of gore" is a very extraordinary expression: yet "mines" seems tolerably appropriate to "chains," and "gore" is perfectly consistent with the general text. I incline to think it ought to be "*rivers of gore.*" Or "*mines of yore*" might have some plausibility; as the passage is about the reinstatement of the old *traditional* forms of despotism.

P. 20.

"Three years he left his native land,
And *in* the fourth, when he returned,
None knew him."

A similar instance to that noted from p. 9.

P. 21.

"On him, whom once 'twas paradise
Even to behold, now misery *lay.*"

There is no rhyme to "*lay.*" That, as we have already seen, is no argument against its being correctly printed. I think, however, "*weighed*" might fairly be suggested as a substitute—rhyming (quite accurately enough for Shelley's practice) with "*fed*" and "*outspread.*"

P. 31.

"In æry rings they bound
My Lionel. As every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly."

In previous editions this has stood—

"My Lionel, *who*, as every strain";

a clause which, followed as it is by the "*his*" of the succeeding line, is annoyingly lax in grammar. The omission of "*who*" requires us to pronounce "*Lionel*" (for the metre's sake) as a full trisyllable: this is quite in accordance with the poet's system in other lines.

P. 33.

"Red morning through the *wood.*"

Hitherto the last word of this line has always been printed "*woods:*" the rhyme to it is "*flood.*" Of course, both words must be made to stand in the

singular, or else both in the plural. The only question is—which of these two alternatives to adopt. I think the singular must be correct; “the floods of the lake” might seem an overstrained expression, whereas “the wood” is entirely consistent with what appears at the beginning of the poem—

“It was a vast and antique wood
Through which they took their way,” &c.

P. 37.

“Every little living nerve

Is like a sapless leaflet now.”

I have rescued these lines (with some consciousness of audacity) from the vexatious grammatical solecism of the original—

“Every little living *nerve*
Are like sapless leaflets now.”

P. 40.

“Perish! Let there only be,” &c.

It is strange to observe how insular even such an Englishman as Shelley can be on occasion. Venice, unless renovated by freedom, is to go to the dogs—leaving one only memory, that Lord Byron lived there for a while after quitting England! Oh shades of Dandolo, of Marco Polo, of Bellini, Carpaccio, Giorgione, Titian, Tintoret, Veronese, and how many another immortal!—There happens to be evidence that this whole passage about Byron was an interpolated afterthought; for Mr. Frederick Locker possesses the original MS. of the passage, headed by Shelley with a note to say where it is to be inserted.

P. 46.

“Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman.”

It can scarcely be needful to observe that Count Maddalo represented, in fact, not a Venetian but an English nobleman—Lord Byron. Julian represented Shelley himself. The poem of *Julian and Maddalo* was sent by Shelley to Leigh Hunt in a letter which contains the following remarks: “It was composed last year at Este. Two of the characters you will recognize; and the third is also, in some degree, a painting from nature, but, with respect to time and place, ideal. . . . I have employed a certain familiar style of language to express the actual way in which people talk with each other whom education and a certain refinement of sentiment have placed above the use of vulgar idioms. I use the word ‘vulgar’ in its most extensive sense. The vulgarity of rank and fashion is as gross, in its way, as that of poverty; and its cant terms equally expressive of bare conceptions, and therefore equally unfit for poetry. Not that the familiar style is to be admitted in the treatment of a subject wholly ideal, or in that part of any subject (which relates to common life) where the passion, exceeding a certain limit, touches the boundaries of that which is ideal. Strong passion expresses itself in metaphor borrowed from objects alike remote or near, and casts over all the shadow of its own greatness. . . . I leave you to judge whether it is best to throw it [*Julian and Maddalo*] into the fire (!), or to publish it.”—A letter to Mr. Ollier dated 15th December 1819 (*Shelley Memorials*) says:—“Have you seen my poem, *Julian and Maddalo*? . . . I mean to write three other poems, the scenes of which will be laid at Rome, Florence, and Naples, but the subjects of which will be all drawn from dreadful or beautiful realities, as that of this was.” Alas that these poems remained unwritten!—and one might say unattempted, were it not that, in the case of Florence, *Ginevra* may be assumed to fulfil this intention. Or *Fiordispina*, the precise locality of which is not indicated in the extant fragmentary lines, might be one of them.

P. 46.

"The unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart."

It strikes me that this would read more naturally if it stood inverted:—"a sufficient text for the comment of every heart,"—i.e., text sufficient for every heart to comment on. But apparently Shelley meant to imply that the exclamations of the madman constituted a comment on misfortunes resembling "many other stories of the same kind"—stories which form "the text of every heart."

P. 47.

"I rode one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice."

This is the Lido. It may be interesting to quote here the account which Shelley, in a letter to his wife, gave of his first ride on the Lido with Lord Byron.¹ "He took me in his gondola across the laguna to a long sandy island which defends Venice from the Adriatic. When we disembarked, we found his horses waiting for us; and we rode along the sands of the sea, talking. Our conversation consisted in histories of his wounded feelings, and questions as to my affairs, and great professions of friendship and regard for me. He said that, if he had been in England at the time of the Chancery affair, he would have moved heaven and earth to have prevented such a decision. We talked of literary matters; his Fourth Canto [of *Childe Harold*], which he says is very good, and indeed repeated some stanzas of great energy to me." In the same letter Shelley had already said that "the weather here is extremely cold"; of which likewise a reminiscence may be traceable in *Julian and Maddalo*. His reference to gondolas is worth citing also. "These gondolas are the most beautiful and convenient boats in the world. They are finely carpeted, and furnished with black, and painted black. The couches on which you lean are extraordinarily soft, and are so disposed as to be the most comfortable to those who lean or sit. The windows have at will either Venetian plate-glass flowered, or Venetian blinds or blinds of black cloth to shut out the light." And again:—"The gondolas themselves are things of a most romantic and picturesque appearance: *I can only compare them to moths of which a coffin might have been the chrysalis*. They are hung with black, and painted black, and carpeted with grey. They curl at the prow and stern; and, at the former, there is a nondescript beak of shining steel, which glitters at the end of its long black mass."

P. 49.

"A windowless, deformed, and dreary pile."

Mr. Browning affirms that the "windowless" building described by Shelley is not what he supposed it to be, the madhouse, but a "penitentiary for rebellious priests, to the west between Venice and the Lido," on the islet of San Clemente. In 1851 Mr. Browning convinced himself of this at Venice; "San Servolo, with its madhouse, far from being 'windowless,' is as full of windows as a barrack." Yet Medwin had said (*Life of Shelley*, vol. i. p. 318), "The madhouse so graphically drawn on the island I know well." The writer of the present notes likewise knows both buildings by sight, but would not venture, of his own direct knowledge, to pronounce which is which: possibly Medwin also only knew by sight a windowless building, and took Shelley's word for it that this was a madhouse. It had occurred to me as possible that the two edifices might have interchanged inmates since Shelley's time, but I believe there is no ground for such a surmise; or windows might have been opened between 1818 and 1851.

¹ *Essays, Letters from Abroad, &c.*, vol. ii p. 109.

P. 52.

"As thus I spoke."

The line which terminates with these words is left rhymeless.

P. 52.

"The clap of tortured hands,

Fierce yells, and howlings, and lamentings keen."

This is a probably conscious reminiscence from the famous lines of Dante :

"Quivi sospiri, pianti, ed alti guai,

Voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle."

P. 57.

"'That you had never seen me.'"

You and *thou* are mixed up in this poem, so far as the madman's speech is concerned. It was probably mere carelessness on Shelley's part : but there might be some greater plausibility in the mixture here than elsewhere, considering the bewilderment of the speaker's mind, his sudden changes of mood, and the greater or less degree of familiarity indicated by a foreigner's use of "thou" and "you."

P. 59.

"The air

Closes upon my accents, as despair

Upon my heart—let death upon *despair*!"

Such is the reading in the *Posthumous Poems*, and in the MS. fortunately brought to light by Mr. Forman, which sets many things right that were wrong heretofore. Later editions give "let death upon *my care*!" This has a make-rhyme sound.

P. 61.

"His dog was dead : his child had now become
A woman."

It would seem that Shelley wrote the opening words under the impression that Maddalo's dog had already been mentioned in the earlier part of the poem. No such mention, however, occurs. The reader will not need to be reminded that this alleged return of Shelley (Julian) to Venice, after an interval of years in which a daughter of Byron (Maddalo) has developed from a small child into a woman, is altogether imaginary. Byron's daughter Allegra, the child here referred to, preceded even Shelley to the tomb, dying when scarcely past infancy.

P. 63.

"From the Baths of Lucca, in 1818."

I have added these introductory words. Mrs. Shelley's note on *Julian and Maddalo* (in the collected editions) has hitherto followed on along with her note on *Rosalind and Helen*; both being mixed up in one consecutive "Note on Poems of 1818." I have adhered to this date, 1818, given in the collected editions; but, in its first form of publication (the volume of *Posthumous Poems*, 1824), *Julian and Maddalo* is dated "Rome, May 1819." Probably the poem was not *finished* until this later date. Internal evidence favours, I think, the surmise that the termination of the poem, beginning with the last paragraph of p. 60, or thereabouts, was written after some interval of time from the preceding portion; written rather with a view to concluding the poem *somehow* than with the same degree of impulse and interest which had prompted the earlier verses, or with the same amplitude of treatment.

P. 64.

"Audisne hæc, Amphiaræ, sub terram abdite?"

This grand line is quoted by Cicero (*Tusc. Disp.* ii. 60) from the *Epigoni* of an unknown author.

P. 64.

"This poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla."

The few words which Shelley here gives to this matter are divinely beautiful: but the reader will not object to see them supplemented by some others, taken from a letter which the poet wrote to Mr. Peacock on the 23rd March 1819.¹ "I think I told you of the Coliseum, and its impression on me, on my first visit to this city. The next most considerable relic of antiquity, considered as a ruin, is the Thermæ of Caracalla. These consist of six enormous chambers, above 200 feet in height, and each enclosing a vast space like that of a field. There are in addition a number of towers and labyrinthine recesses, hidden and woven over by the wild growth of weeds and ivy. Never was any desolation more sublime and lovely. The perpendicular wall of ruin is cloven into steep ravines filled up with flowering shrubs, whose thick twisted roots are knotted in the rifts of the stones. At every step, the aerial pinnacles of shattered stone group into new combinations of effect, and tower above the lofty yet level walls, as the distant mountains change their aspect to one travelling rapidly along the plain. . . . These walls surround green and level spaces of lawn, on which some elms have grown, and which are interspersed towards their skirts by masses of the fallen ruin, overtwin'd with the broad leaves of the creeping weeds. The blue sky canopies it, and is as the everlasting roof of these enormous halls.—But the most interesting effect remains. In one of the buttresses that supports an immense and lofty arch 'which bridges the very winds of heaven,' are the crumbling remains of an antique winding staircase, whose sides are open in many places to the precipice. This you ascend, and arrive on the summit of these piles. There grow on every side thick entangled wildernesses of myrtle, and the myrletus, and bay, and the flowering laurestinus (whose white blossoms are just developed), the white fig, and a thousand nameless plants sown by the wandering winds. These woods are intersected on every side by paths, like sheep-tracks through the copsewood of steep mountains, which wind to every part of the immense labyrinth. From the midst rise those pinnacles and masses, themselves like mountains, which have been seen from below. In one place you wind along a narrow strip of weed-grown ruin. On one side is the immensity of earth and sky; on the other, a narrow chasm which is bounded by an arch of enormous size, fringed by the many-coloured foliage and blossoms, and supporting a lofty and irregular pyramid, overgrown, like itself, with the all-prevailing vegetation. Around rise other crags and other peaks; all arrayed, and the deformity of their vast desolation softened down, by the undecaying investiture of Nature. . . . Still further, winding up one half of the shattered pyramids, by the path through the blooming copsewood, you come to a little mossy lawn surrounded by the wild shrubs. It is overgrown by anemones, wallflowers, and violets, whose stalks pierce the starry moss, and with radiant blue flowers whose names I know not, and which scatter through the air the divinest odour—which, as you recline under the shade of the ruin, produces sensations of voluptuous faintness, like the combinations of sweet music. The paths still wind on, threading the perplexed windings, other labyrinths, other lawns, and deep dells of wood, and lofty rocks, and terrific chasms. When I tell you that these ruins cover several acres, and that the paths above penetrate at least half their extent, your imagination will fill up all that I am unable to express of this astonishing scene."

Prometheus and *Adonais* were viewed by Shelley with more complacency than his other poems. It will be interesting to collect here some of his expres-

¹ *Essays, Letters from Abroad, &c.*, vol. ii. pp. 58-60.

sions concerning the former, in addition to the phrases cited by Mrs. Shelley from a letter dated 6th April 1819.—6th Sept. 1819. "My *Prometheus* . . . is, in my judgment, of a higher character than anything I have yet attempted, and is perhaps less an imitation of anything that has gone before it."—15th Oct. 1819. "The *Prometheus*, a poem in my best style, whatever that may amount to, will arrive with it: . . . it is the most perfect of my productions."—15th Dec. 1819. "My *Prometheus* is the best thing I ever wrote."—6th March 1820 (to Mr. Ollier). "Prometheus Unbound, I must tell you, is my favourite poem: I charge you therefore specially to pet him, and feed him with fine ink and good paper. *Cenci* is written for the multitude, and ought to sell well: I think, if I may judge by its merits, the *Prometheus* cannot sell beyond twenty copies."—8th June 1821. "You may announce for publication a poem entitled *Adonais*. . . . I shall send it you either printed at Pisa, or transcribed in such a manner as it shall be difficult for the reviser to leave such errors as assist the obscurity of the *Prometheus*" [which the Gisbornes had been requested to revise, with the co-operation of Mr. Ollier himself: Mr. Peacock, however, seems to have taken the principal part].—10th April 1822. "Prometheus was never intended for more than five or six persons."—[Conversation reported by Trelawny.] "My friends say my *Prometheus* is too wild, ideal, and perplexed with imagery: it may be so. It has no resemblance to the Greek drama: it is original, and cost me severe labour. Authors, like mothers, prefer the children who have given them most trouble."

P. 66.

"What a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms 'a passion for reforming the world.'"

This phrase is in Forsyth's *Principles of Moral Science*.

P. 70.

"Speak, Spirit! From thine inorganic voice,
I only know that thou art moving near,
And love. How cursed I him?"

Taking this passage exactly as it stands, I understand it to mean: "I only know that thou [the Spirit of the Earth] art moving near me, and that Love is also moving near me." This seems to be the direct sense: but how far is it significant in, and consistent with, its context? The idea that "Love" is near Prometheus in his agony seems to be very abruptly and startlingly introduced. Driven to seek for some reason *why* Love should thus be near, the reader may be fain to think he has found it in the fact that Panthea and Ione are there, to comfort Prometheus, as far as the conditions of the case allow. But this does not seem admissible; for the statement made by Prometheus is that he knows the presence of the Earth-Spirit and of Love from the "inorganic voice" of the former. If we attempt a verbal alteration, the first that suggests itself is to read—

"I only know that thou art moving near,
And lov'st"—

i.e., "that thou are present with, and lovingly disposed towards, me." But neither does this look consistent with what Prometheus had said in his last preceding speech to the Earth—

"Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove
Both they and thou had vanished."

Another emendation occurs to me: but I confess that it is an audacious one—much too audacious to be intruded into the text:

"Speak, Spirit! From thine inorganic voice,
I only know that thou art moving near
And *Jove*—how cursed I him?"

P. 72.

"The Magus Zoroaster, my *dead* child."

This is the reading of the original edition—not "*dear*," as in some subsequent issues. I think "*dead*" the better epithet of the two, according to its place in the context.

P. 80.

"Thou think'st we will live through thee, one by one," &c.

It seems pretty clear (as B. V. pointed out to me) that the whole of this speech forms a taunting interrogation—like the two preceding speeches beginning "Thou thinkest," and "Dost imagine." The interrogative sign is not however given in previous editions.

P. 80.

"And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck."

One is strongly inclined (with B. V.) to set the rhyme right by reading "*wrack*."

P. 81.

Fourth Fury, Fifth Fury, &c.

In other editions these are called "First Fury, Second Fury," &c. But this confounds them with the Furies (First, Second, and Third) who have *already* been speaking; whereas it is quite certain that these new speakers are new arrivals, come to the summons contained in the preceding "Chorus of Furies." For the sake of clearness, I have therefore felt warranted in making this small change.

P. 86.

"A rainbow's arch stood on the sea
Which rocked beneath, immovably;
And the triumphant storm did flee
(Like a conqueror, swift and proud)
Between,—with many a captive cloud."

This has hitherto been punctuated—

"And the triumphant storm did flee,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Between with many a captive cloud."

It seems very desirable to mark, by definite punctuation, the only sense of which "*between*" appears capable—*i.e.*, "the storm did flee *between*—or through the arch of—the rainbow."

P. 86.

"I sate beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had *fed*."

"The book where he had fed" is surely a most slovenly expression. It can only mean "the book in or from which he had fed his mind"; which sense would be rather less badly expressed by "*whence* he had fed." I should strongly surmise that Shelley had, in the first instance, written "where he had *read*"; and then, observing the preceding rhyme "*red*," altered "*read*" into "*fed*," without reflecting that he ought to conciliate this "*fed*" with "*where*" by some modification of the latter word also.

P. 88.

"Till thou, O King of Sadness,

Turn'st by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness."

In previous editions, the word is "*turned*": Grammar protests against that.

The uppermost substitute would be "Turn'dst." This, however, is so un-euphonious that I think "Turn'st" may fairly claim a preference.

P. 88.

"Desolation is a delicate thing."

This (as B. V. observes to me) is related to the speech of Agathon, in Plato's *Symposium*, beginning "For Homer says that the Goddess of Calamity is delicate."

P. 91.

"But not as now,—since I am made the wind" &c.

This passage, to the end of the speech, is by no means perspicuous to me. I suppose, however, that it is printed much as Shelley intended it to stand, and that its general meaning is as follows: "Erewhile I used to sleep locked, as now, in Ione's arms. Yet not exactly as now: for now I find myself, in dream, conversing with thee; and being thus in converse with thee, I had a sleep troubled and yet sweet, whereas my waking hours are too full of care and pain." B. V. suggests to me (and I agree with him) that "*Is* troubled and yet sweet" (instead of "*Was* troubled" &c.) would simplify the flow of the passage.

P. 94.

"It is some being

Around the crags."

I suspect "around" of being a misprint for either "among" or "amid."

P. 97.

"The storm of sound is driven along,
Sucked up and hurrying: as they fleet
Behind, its gathering billows meet," &c.

This is substantially the punctuation of the later editions: the first edition gives no stop after "hurrying."—B. V. has called my attention to the great uncertainties which beset the whole punctuation of the passage. The main question of course is—What do the lines mean exactly? The most consistent sense seems to me to be this: "And so they [the destined spirits] float upon their way, until, still sweet but loud and strong, the storm of sound is driven along. As they [the spirits] fleet onward, sucked up and hurrying, its gathering billows [*i.e.*, the billows, either of the sound, or else of the plume-uplifting wind from the breathing earth behind, as mentioned shortly before] meet behind, and bear [the spirits] to the fatal mountain." If this is correct, our punctuation is the contrary: we should read—

"The storm of sound is driven along.
Sucked up and hurrying as they fleet,
Behind its gathering billows meet,
And" &c.

P. 97.

"Ay, many more *which* we may well divine."

Should this be "more *than*" &c.?

P. 100.

"Resist not the weakness!"

The chief *raison d'être* of this line manifestly is that it should rhyme to "meekness." It must, however, have *some* meaning beyond this; which meaning I should apprehend to be—"Attempt not to overcome thine own weakness, which makes thee passive in our hands." If so, "Resist not *thy* weakness" would express the sense more distinctly, and would perhaps be the true reading.

P. 100.

"Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,
Ungazed-upon and shapeless. Neither limb," &c.

I suspect that the full-stop ought to come after "sun"; the succeeding words applying to Demogorgon, and commencing a new sentence.

P. 101.

"Who made that sense which, *at* the winds of Spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one beloved heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears?"

I have here taken a serious liberty with the text: substituting "*at*" for "*when*." Let the reader peruse the whole sentence with "*when*," and he will infallibly find that something is either wrong or missing. I have no doubt that in fact a *whole line* is missing through Shelley's oversight, or less likely through the printer's; and presume that the entire meaning ought to run something like this: "Who made that sense which—when the wind of Spring in rarest visitation, or the voice of one beloved heard in youth alone, *is felt or heard again*—fills the faint eyes with falling tears?" For an editor to supply a line would be the height of audacity: he has therefore to choose between some minor form of emendation, and the leaving of a vexatious hiatus in the structure and meaning of the sentence. I have made bold to adopt the former alternative. By reading "*at*," we do not indeed obtain the full sense *very fully expressed*; but we do obtain a passable suggestion of it, and get rid of the defect of structure.—See the *Witch of Atlas*, st. xiv., for a very parallel passage.

P. 103.

"But who *rains* down
Evil," &c.

The word in the original edition (altered in all later ones) is "*reigns*"; and Mr. Forman has restored that, deeming it correct. I cannot at all agree with his conclusion, nor with the reason which he assigns for it.

P. 103.

"Who is master of the slave?—If the abysm."

This line has hitherto stood printed "Who is *the* master" &c. That is so evident an excess of metre that one may well, I think, regard it as a misprint, or mere casual oversight.

P. 104.

"Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed."

The same letter of Shelley's to Mr. Peacock which has been already quoted from (see p. 427) contains a passage which might seem to furnish the genesis of these beautiful lines. He is speaking of the Arch of Constantine. "The keystone of these arches is supported each by two winged figures of Victory, *whose hair floats on the wind of their own speed*, and whose arms are outstretched, bearing trophies, as if impatient to meet."

P. 107.

"Fair are others; none beholds thee
(But thy voice sounds low and tender,
Like the fairest), for it folds thee
From the sight—that liquid splendour;
And all feel," &c.

The punctuation here is my own. In the early editions we find—

"Fair are others; none beholds thee,
But thy voice sounds low and tender

Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel," &c.

This seems to afford very little guidance towards the meaning of the passage. I think (Mr. W. Hale White, of Carshalton, called my special attention to this) that we must understand "that liquid splendour" to be the same thing as "this atmosphere divinest" in the preceding stanza; and we should do our best—as I attempt by punctuation—to keep the primary part of the present stanza primary, and its secondary part secondary.

P. 107.

"Which in the winds *and* on the waves doth move."

I confidently insert the "*and*," which does not appear in previous editions. If the reader will look to the other two stanzas of Asia's lyrical speech, he will perceive that each of the penultimate lines is a decasyllabic; and that the metrical structure of the three stanzas is in all other respects identical. I therefore infer, as a matter almost of demonstration, that this penultimate line of the intermediate stanza ought also to be a decasyllabic—which it becomes by the addition of the "*and*." Moreover, this makes the form of expression more natural—more what one would *a priori* expect it to be.

P. 109.

"Under my wrath's *night*."

Mrs. Shelley's editions substitute "night" for "might"; I infer, correctly and with authority.

P. 111.

"Round many-peopled continents."

The compound adjective "many-peopled" (instead of "many peopled") is a conjectural emendation proposed by Miss Blind in the *Westminster Review* article; conjectural, but I think indisputable.

P. 114.

"Than all thy sisters, this the mystic shell."

In the original edition, "this *is* the mystic shell." I am by no means confident but that "*is*" ought to be restored.

P. 121.

"The palaces and tombs

Of those who were their conquerors, mouldering round.
Those imaged," &c.

The ordinary punctuation gives a colon after "conquerors," and no stop at all after "round." Mr. Swinburne (in his article in the *Fortnightly Review*) expounds a meaning in accordance with the old punctuation, admitting at the same time that the sentence can barely be construed. As I cannot help feeling strongly convinced that the altered punctuation (which I proposed in 1868 in *Notes and Queries*) is correct, I have introduced it into the text, and here add a paraphrase of the passage, as I understand and punctuate it.—"Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons, were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes sculptured by the ancient Egyptians on still unworn obelisks, and recording matters once famous, now forgotten,—which shapes yet look forth in triumph over the palaces and tombs of their Saracenic or other conquerors, now mouldering around them. Those shapes did, at the time when their meaning was understood, image forth, unto the pride of kings and priests of that remote age, a dark yet mighty faith, a supernatural and desolating power coextensive with the world: now, being no longer understood, those shapes are mere objects of astonishment. And even so the thrones, altars, judg-

ment-seats, and prisons, remain as yet unruined, but are now unregarded, and their meanings gone."

P. 122.

"The man remains,—

Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man :
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself ; just, gentle, wise : but man.
Passionless? no :—yet free from guilt or pain."

I have altered the punctuation and emphasis of these lines by putting a colon at the end of the first, and a full-stop at the end of the second, line ending with the word "man." In other editions, there are no stops at these particular points. The reader will observe that thus, in those other editions, the statement made at the opening of the passage is that "man remains sceptreless (unsubjected to any sceptre), *but* equal, exempt from degree, and the king over himself ; free, *but* exempt from awe ; uncircumscribed, *but* unclassed, tribeless, and nationless." A little reflection will show that this "*but*" is quite inappropriate ; for there is no opposition or antithesis, but the contrary, between the epithets which precede the "*but*," and those which succeed it. I am convinced therefore that this old punctuation is wrong, and mine right : the gist of the statement now being different—viz. : that "man, though sceptreless, free, and uncircumscribed, is still man ; though equal, the king over himself, &c., he is still man. He has not passed from the human into any other condition : only his human condition is now an exalted instead of a dejected one."

P. 124.

"The pine-boughs are singing
Old songs with new *gladness*."

The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of *gladness*."

If Shelley had observed that his printer or himself had here twice given "gladness" as the rhyme, I almost think he would have altered one of the two. The first "*gladness*" is plainly right ; the second might not unreasonably be altered into "*madness*"; understanding "*madness*" in the sense of "*frenzied exultation*," or more especially "*maniac glee*." Thus, on p. 132—

"The joy, the triumph, the delight, the *madness* !
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness !"

And the same two words as rhymes are frequently encountered in other pages of Shelley—for instance in the *Skylark*, st. xxi.

P. 129.

"Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost."

Every ear must notice the exceptional, not to say unrhythmical, quality of this line. Should it read thus ?

"Its feathers are as plumes of sunny frost."

P. 130.

"Purple and azure, white *and* green and golden."

The italicized "*and*" is not in other editions. I cannot doubt that Shelley gave it in, for the metre's sake.

P. 131.

"Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings."

I intended to give here (but the printer has thwarted me) the spelling "lightenings," instead of "lightnings." The latter word leaves a syllable deficient in the line. So again, pp. 182 and 388, and vol. iii. p. 210.

P. 131.

"And serpents, bony chains twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
 To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
 Had crushed *the iron crags*."

This repetition of "the iron crags" may be an oversight. But at all events it is Shelley's own oversight, and emendation is impossible. See in *Queen Mab*, p. 214, a similar repetition of "the topmost tower;" but Shelley, in his amended copy, cut out the former of the two repeated phrases.

P. 135.

"A half-*infrozen* dew-globe."

This is the reading in the original edition: later texts alter it into "*unfrozen*." It appears to me that "*infrozen*" is right; for the whole simile sets forth how the *warmth* of dawn dissolves a dew-drop into mist. To call this dew-drop, in the first instance, "half frozen" (or "infrozen") furthers the simile; but to call it "half unfrozen" counteracts the simile. It may be questioned whether this simile, "As the dissolving warmth" &c., refers back to the *preceding* speech of the Moon, or rather is responded to by the *succeeding* speech of the Moon. I rather think the latter; in which case this stanza, uttered by the Earth, should properly be punctuated with a — at its close.

P. 136.

"When the sunset sleeps
 Upon its snow,
 And the weak day weeps
 That it should be so."

In previous editions the second of these two couplets is assigned to the Earth as speaker, not to the Moon. That an alteration should not be lightly made in such a case I am the first to admit: but it appears to me *certain* that this couplet ought to belong to the Moon, and I have therefore, as under an editorial obligation, made the transfer. It had appeared to me certain, simply on this internal evidence—that the couplet completes the sense, the metre, and the rhyme, of the Moon's speech, and is at variance with all these properties of the Earth's speech. But assurance is made doubly sure when we turn to the *Fragment*, vol. iii. p. 383. Here we find that Shelley had at first written, in continuation of the Moon's speech; six lines, which he afterwards cut out, substituting this couplet: and one cannot but see in a moment the great probability that the substituted couplet may have been so jammed in between the Moon's speech and the Earth's as to seem, to the printer's eye, proper rather to the second than the first.

P. 139.

"From the last giddy hour
 Of *dread* endurance."

In the original edition, "dead endurance"; which may perhaps be correct.

P. 140.

"A slight fragment of a song of Tasso."

See vol. iii. p. 134. The residue of the *Tasso* fragment has been recovered since Mrs. Shelley wrote.

P. 143.

"The verbal alterations in this edition of *Prometheus* are made from a list of errata written by Shelley himself."

The reader who notices that in one or two instances I have restored the readings of the original edition of the *Prometheus* may perhaps infer that I had overlooked this statement by Mrs. Shelley. Such, however, is not the case. I quite assume, and act upon the assumption, that some things wrong in the

first edition are set right in the collected editions. But, unfortunately for himself, an editor cannot know how far this is the case in particular instances: he cannot know that what seems to him a misprint is in fact an emendation. The arbiter must at last be his own judgment, guided by scrupulous reluctance to alter, unless alteration seems strictly necessary. I hope to have acted within this rule.

P. 145.

"Preserved in the Colonna Palace."

Now in the Barberini Palace.

P. 147.

"The Castle of Petrella."

This Castle is near Aquila, close to the frontier of the Papal States.

P. 148.

Relation of the Death of the Family of the Cenci.

Among the works of that most admirable writer Henri Beyle (De Stendhal) is one named *Chroniques et Nouvelles*—a set of Italian narratives, dark with passion and crime. Of these narratives, one tells the story of the Cenci, as written down in Italian on the 14th September 1599; and Beyle gives a translation of it. It agrees in many respects with the Relation published by Shelley, but differs in others. I must confine myself to specifying a very few points.

1. Shelley says that Beatrice Cenci was twenty years old at the date of her death. Beyle says sixteen. Both are incorrect. In the *Daily News* of the 8th March 1877 it was notified that Signor Francesco Labruzzo had discovered the baptismal register, which runs thus: "12th February 1577; Beatrice, daughter of Signor Francesco Cenci, and of Signora Ersilia his wife, at the Church of San Tommaso dei Cenci." She was therefore in her twenty-third year when executed.

2. Shelley gives the date of execution as the 11th May 1599; Beyle, the 11th September. The latter is correct.

3. Shelley gives the age of Bernardo, at the same date, as "six-and-twenty." This is of course utterly inconsistent with Shelley's own treatment of Bernardo throughout his drama—which treatment one was left to regard as an intentional poetical liberty. Beyle, however, gives the age as fifteen; and I almost think the appearance of "six-and-twenty" in the translated Relation must be a mere casual error—more especially as this was, according to Beyle, the true age of Giacomo (not "twenty-eight," as in Shelley's Relation).

4. Another casual error must, I suspect, be the statement (p. 151) that Monsignor Guerra, when disguised as a charcoal-man, went along "with some bread and onions in his hands." Beyle says that Guerra "allait criant partout son charbon avec la bouche pleine de pain et d'oignons."

5. According to Beyle, it was not (as in Shelley) "a surgeon" who assassinated Rocco Cenci, but a "charcutier," or pork-butcher.

P. 149.

"Castellan of the Rock of Petrella."

Shelley must have found in the Italian narrative the words "Rocca di Petrella," and supposed "Rocca" to be "Rock." It is properly "fortress, stronghold"; although sometimes used by Italians as meaning "rock," *quasi* "roccia." So also on pp. 172, 184.

P. 150.

"A sheet covered with blood, saying: . . ."

"The passage here omitted from the translation," says Mr. Forman, "contains the deposition of the Petrella laundress." It is given in Beyle's book.

P. 156.

"Prince Colonna."

I have inserted this name in the *Dramatis Personæ*.

P. 157.

"So much that you might honourably live,
And reconcile yourself with your own heart,
And with your God, and with the offended world."

Something has already been said (p. 426) concerning the jumbled use of the pronouns "thou" and "you," and their congeners. The tragedy of *The Cenci* is naturally the poem of Shelley's which gives most play for such jumbling, and the author has freely used the opportunity. Indeed, no blunder is more common—one might say, constant—with English authors, good and bad alike: none is more teasing to the ear which happens to be punctilious enough to catch it. As regards *The Cenci* more especially, two points are worth noticing. 1st, That, if Shelley had attentively reproduced the modes of Italian diction, he would have used "thou" for all speeches from superiors to inferiors, or between two speakers who are extremely affectionate or intimate, and "you" for all other speeches: 2nd, that, if he had neglected this extra-nicety, but had pursued some other plan *on system*, we should probably find "thou" in all the more solemn or exalted passages, and "you" in all the more level ones. In point of fact, the poet has not acted systematically upon either of these rules, nor upon any rule at all: all sorts of people say, on all sorts of occasions, sometimes "thou" and sometimes "you." If I may trust my own judgment, this is at best an inexcusable laxity; and, when one "thou" appears among several instances of "you" in one same speech (or *vice versa*), is so slatternly that an editor is warranted in regarding it as a careless slip of syntax and language, and in altering it accordingly. This I have done in a few cases—such only as are peculiarly flagrant, and do not cause practical difficulties in the rectifying process. The first instance forms the citation at the head of the present note: in previous texts, "thou" &c. are used four times, and "you" &c. fourteen times, in the speech quoted from. The other instances (as altered in our edition) are as follows:

P. 175.—"I know thou art my friend."

P. 211.—"I pray you, Cardinal, that you assert."

P. 213.—"Think I adjure thee, what it is to slay."

There is one other very bad case; but I have flinched from altering an old-fashioned and literary idiom into a modern substitute:

P. 212.—"*Beatrice (turning to the Judges).* I prithee mark."

P. 159.

"Would speak with you.

"Bid him attend me in

The grand saloon.

"Farewell; and I will pray."

These lines have always been misprinted hitherto. One line has been made out of—

"Bid him attend me in the grand saloon";

and the residue has been left fragmentary.

P. 165.

"What if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them and triumphs? What if we,
The desolate and the dead, *were* his own flesh,
His children and his wife," &c.

The phrase, "What if *'tis* he" would naturally be followed by the phrase "What if we *are* his own flesh." Taking into account this point, and also the

expression "he who *clothed* us in these limbs," I strongly suspect that the word "were" ought to be "wear."

P. 166.

"Dare *not* one look on me?"

So in the original edition, printed in Italy. The first London edition, 1821, gives "*no* one," which, though I think it a shade less energetic, runs more naturally, and should perhaps be preferred.

P. 179.

"*Lucretia*. My sweet child I know you—

"*Beatrice*.

Yet speak it not."

This line lacks a syllable. In *Lucretia's* mouth, "know you *not*" would seem the right phrase, rather than "know you." Perhaps Shelley had first written the "not"; then cut it out, observing the other "not" closing the line; and forgot to put in an extra syllable elsewhere. This were easy to manage by changing "sweet" into "sweetest."

P. 189.

"But that no power can fill with vital oil,
That broken lamp of flesh."

The comma after "oil" is in the first London edition, not in the Italian edition. It alters the sense, making the words "But *that*" signify the same thing as "*that* broken lamp of flesh." This is more energetic and impressive than the sense as it stood punctuated originally, and claims, I think, a reasonable preference.

P. 190.

"Nor all the taunts

Which from the prosperous weak misfortune takes."

The plagiarizing reminiscence from *Hamlet* in these lines will strike the loosest memory: others from *Othello* and *Macbeth* are equally glaring at the beginning of the same scene, and its end. Nor are these the only ones. Yet no doubt Shelley was sincere in referring (see p. 146) to a particular imitation of Calderon as "the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece."

P. 191.

"When next we meet . . .

"May all be done,—and all

Forgotten!"

This is the reading of the original Italian edition. Some readers will no doubt prefer the variation which appears in the English texts, assigning the words "May all be done" to the first speaker (*Orsino*): my own preference, however, is rather the other way, and at any rate, as a question of authority, I know of nothing to impugn the original reading.

P. 195.

"With thine own blinding beams!

"Peace! peace!"

The line stands thus truncated in all the editions. Perhaps we ought to read —"Peace, *husband*! peace!"

P. 198.

Scene iii.

The reader will observe, near the opening of this scene, two lines, of which one is too short, and the other too long. If a re-arrangement of the lines would have set the metre right, I should not have scrupled to give it: but this is not the case—*some* inaccuracy would always remain.

P. 200.

"The jellied blood."

This word is, in the original edition, "gellyed"; in later editions, "jellied." Thus it is hard to determine whether Shelley really meant "gelid," frozen, or "jellied," coagulated: I think the latter.

P. 204.

"Guilty! who dares talk of guilt? My lord."

My own sense of rhythm would dictate the insertion of "to" in this line after "dares." But Mr. Swinburne (*Fortnightly Review*) prefers the rhythm as it stands; so I perceive it would be unsafe to make the addition.

P. 210.

"Now let me die."

"This sounds as bad as truth."

This line is metrically complete as above: but previous texts tag on to it the words "Guards there." The difference which I have made in this respect entails a few corresponding differences (merely in the methodizing of the lines) in the following three verses.

P. 210.

"On the *dead* earth."

This is the reading of the original edition: "*dread*," as in subsequent editions, is a manifest perversion.

P. 214.

"A keener pang."

"Pang" is the reading of the second edition; "pain," of the first.

P. 216.

"For some brief spasms of pain, which are *at least*
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass."

I think this should be "*at most*." The *utmost* harm which the spasms of pain can do lasts no longer than the limbs which they affect.

P. 223.

"Whose love was *as* a bond to all our loves."

I have inserted "*as*," conceiving it to be a necessity of metre which Shelley can only by inadvertence have neglected.

P. 225.

"An accomplished lady living near us."

Mrs. Gisborne. See the poem, p. 317.

P. 225.

"The following letter to a friend in London."

Mr. Peacock. The letter, dated "July 1819, Livorno," is printed in the *Essays &c.*, vol. ii. pp. 175-178.

P. 226.

"I must be contented with an inferior actor."

The original letter contains some further particulars, which may as well be inserted here, regarding the tragedy.—"I think you know some of the people of that theatre, or at least some one who knows them: and, when you have read the play, you may say enough perhaps to induce them not to reject it without consideration. But of this perhaps, if I may judge from the tragedies

which they have accepted, there is no danger at any rate. Write to me as soon as you can on this subject, because it is necessary that I should present it—or, if rejected by the theatre, print it—this coming season: lest somebody else should get hold of it, as the story, which now exists only in manuscript, begins to be generally known among the English. The translation which I send you is to be prefixed to the play, together with a print of Beatrice. I have a copy of her picture by Guido, now in the Colonna Palace at Rome—the most beautiful creature you can conceive. Of course you will not show the manuscript to any one.”—Lady Shelley mentions that the reason for preserving a strict incognito as to the authorship of *The Cenci* was Shelley's apprehension that, were it produced on the stage and known to be his, his sister-in-law Miss Westbrook might hire people to hiss it down.—I am told that the eminent tragedian Macready, some while after his retirement from the stage, said he would return to it for the express purpose of acting Count Cenci, were the opportunity to offer: a great testimony to the value of the character for the purposes of the acting drama.

P. 227.

“Is it a party in a parlour, &c. [*Peter Bell*, by W. Wordsworth.]”

These lines were in the original edition of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell*; but were afterwards sacrificed on the shrine of public opinion, and do not appear in the now current editions.—The meaning of the title *Peter Bell* THE THIRD, and of some allusions in the course of the poem, is left wholly unelucidated in Mrs. Shelley's note: I must therefore explain it.

Wordsworth's poem of *Peter Bell* (relating, as we all know, to a blackguardly potter, who gets converted to propriety of life by a jackass and a methodist) was notified as about to appear, and poetical readers were on the alert for it, when a brochure entitled *Peter Bell, a Lyrical Ballad* (now extremely rare, but most properly reprinted in Mr. Forman's *Shelley*) issued from the press, being in fact a satire on certain traits of Wordsworth's mind and poetry. It was written by John Hamilton Reynolds, author of the *Garden of Florence*, &c., a verse-writer of much more than common talent and point, now more nearly forgotten than he ought to be: but of course his name was not given on the title-page. Soon after this “*Peter Bell* the first,” came out “*Peter Bell* the second”—i.e. the genuine poem by Wordsworth; some commotion and bewilderment being caused in the minds of readers by this rapid and conflicting Petrine succession. Both poems were reviewed in the *Examiner* (26 April and 3 May 1819). Knowing something of the poems from the *Examiner* critique (“Mr. Examiner Hunt . . . presented me to two of the Mr. Bells”), and presumably something more from the poems themselves, Shelley seized upon the subject, and produced his *Peter Bell the Third*. The reader acquainted with Wordsworth's poem will perceive that the story indicated (such as it is) in Shelley's has really nothing to do with that of the poet of Rydal Mount: nor has it much consecutive connexion with that of Mr. Reynolds. This latter imagines a graveyard wherein are interred several of the personages of Wordsworth's poems. One tombstone is inscribed for “W. W.” (of course, Wordsworth himself), who “never more shall trouble you trouble you.”

P. 227.

“Thomas Brown Esq., the Younger, H. F.”

This (minus “H. F.”) is the pseudonym which Moore used in his satirical poems, *The Twopenny Postbag* and *The Fudge Family*. “H. F.” remains to be accounted for: Mr. Garnett suggests to me that it may possibly stand for “Historian of the Fudges”; or may it mean “Hiberniæ Filius”?

P. 227.

“To occupy a permanent station in the literature of my country.”

These words are quoted (not with strict verbal correctness) from Wordsworth's dedication, addressed to Southey, of his *Peter Bell*.

P. 235.

"In his own service—and new clothes."

For the rhyme's sake, "clothes" must be pronounced "cloes," and perhaps had better be so printed.

P. 236.

"There is a Castles, and a Canning."

Castles was a government spy, much loathed in those days; so also Oliver, mentioned on p. 254.—I am unable to fill up the name left blank in the succeeding stanza (iii.). The statement that the personage "has lost his wits, or sold them," might be supposed to indicate Southey; but the ensuing assertion that he "ever grows more grim and rich" seems to point to some renegade more conspicuous for worldly station.

P. 240.

"To bully *one* another's guilt."

"One," instead of "out," is Mr. Fleay's indisputable correction.

P. 242.

"Bocca baciata" &c.

These lines from Boccaccio mean: "A mouth that has been kissed loses not its charm, but renews like the moon." A passage from a letter addressed by Shelley to Leigh Hunt (27 Sept. 1819), much about the time when he wrote *Peter Bell the Third*, may be appropriately quoted here. "I have been lately reading this most divine writer [Boccaccio]. He is, in a high sense of the word, a poet, and his language has the rhythm and harmony of verse. I think him not equal certainly to Dante or Petrarch, but far superior to Tasso and Ariosto, the children of a later and of a colder day. I consider the three first as the productions of the vigour of the infancy of a new nation—as rivulets from the same spring as that which fed the greatness of the Republics of Florence and Pisa. . . . How much do I admire Boccaccio!—What descriptions of Nature are those in his little introductions to every new day!—it is the morning of life stripped of that mist of familiarity which makes it obscure to us. Boccaccio seems to me to have possessed a deep sense of the fair ideal of human life, considered in its social relations: his more serious theories of love agree especially with mine. He often expresses things lightly too which have serious meanings of a very beautiful kind. He is a moral casuist; the opposite of the christian, stoical, ready-made, and worldly system of morals. Do you remember one little remark (or rather maxim) of his, which might do some good to the common narrow-minded conceptions of love? 'Bocca baciata' &c."¹

P. 246.

"Sweet both to feel and understand,
As pipkins late to mountain cotter."

"For mountain cotter" (in apposition with "for all the land") would perhaps be the true reading. Peter—using language as, while a potter, he had used clay—now made songs for all the land, as he had lately made pipkins for mountain cotters.

P. 246.

"And Mr. — the bookseller."

The rhythm seems to indicate that the word represented by the — is a monosyllable: otherwise I should infer "Longman" to be the correct name, as the firm of Longman & Co. were the publishers of *Peter Bell*, and of other poems by Wordsworth issued about the same time.

¹ *Essays, Letters from Abroad, &c.*, vol. pp. 183, 184.

P. 247.

"Another: 'Let him shave his head.'"

There is no rhyme to "head"—"hope" and "Pope" being the rhymes which ensue. This matter of rhyme is by no means scrupulously attended to in *Peter Bell the Third*; but the present is an extreme instance. As a substitute for "head," "top" or "crop" might be suggested.

P. 247.

"One more: 'Is incest not enough?'"

"Enough" has (again) no rhyme; this the first line of the stanza being supposed to rhyme with the third and fourth lines, which end with the words "liar" and "fire." Sooner than leave the first line wholly rhymeless, one might be tempted to assume that Shelley meant it should (by way of exception) rhyme with the second and fifth lines, ending with "too" and "you"; to effect which, "enough" might be re-spelled as "enow."—As to the gist of the lines, incest and adultery, these accusations were never, I presume, launched by the most rabid of reviewers against the respectable Wordsworth: there was another contemporary poet, Shelley himself, in whose ear that particular sort of dingdong was much oftener rung.

P. 248.

"'Tis very cruel

To speak of me and Betty so!"

This name has hitherto stood "Emma." But see, in the *Shelley Memorials* (p. 139), the letter addressed by Shelley to his publisher Ollier on 14th May 1820. "For 'Emma' read 'Betty,' as the name of Peter's sister. 'Emma,' I recollect, is the real name of the sister of a great poet who might be mistaken for Peter."

P. 251.

"The old Peter Bell, the hard old potter."

I have ventured to insert the word "Bell": without this or some such monosyllable the metre is miserably cramped.

P. 251.

"'And I and you,

My dearest Soul, will then make merry,

As the Prince Regent did with Sherry,—

Ay, and at last desert me too."

The meaning of the last line is by no means distinct to me. If it ran "desert him too," that would be intelligible enough, as completing the statement of the Prince Regent's conduct to Sheridan. If this surmise is not correct, perhaps the last line should be understood as the retort of the "Soul" to Peter Bell,—as much as to say: "Yes, you would make merry with me as the Prince Regent did with Sherry; and, like him, you too would in the end desert me." But the whole thing is too uncertain to me to allow of a change in the text.

P. 252.

"'May Carnage and Slaughter,'" &c.

The allusion in these lines is to Wordsworth's *Thanksgiving Ode on the Battle of Waterloo*. The passage more particularly referred to has been softened down in later issues of Wordsworth's poems, but it used to stand thus:

"We bow our heads before Thee, and we laud

And magnify Thy name, Almighty God!

But Thy most dreaded instrument

In working out a pure intent

Is man arrayed for mutual slaughter:

Yea, Carnage is thy daughter."

P. 254.

"Fewer

Have fluttered tamer to the lure
Than he."

"Fewer" is obviously wrong in point of meaning; it should be "few." But no doubt Shelley, bent upon a rhyme, wrote "fewer," not reflecting, or not caring, that it makes no real sense.

P. 257.

"Were dead to their harmonious strife."

The construction of this line, in connexion with the earlier part of the stanza, is not very clear. It appears, however, that "their harmonious strife" must be "the harmonious strife of the earth and springs, and of the air and winds" which sense I have aimed at bringing out by the punctuation.

P. 259.

"The fourth part of a long poem in blank verse."

The allusion is to a passage in the *eighth* part of *The Excursion* (as now published, at any rate). There seems to be no particular harm in the passage.

P. 260.

"I need scarcely observe that nothing personal to the author of *Peter Bell* is intended in this poem."

Mrs. Shelley's observations on *Peter Bell the Third* appear to be more courteous than candid. Surely it is manifest that Shelley *does* here fall foul of Wordsworth with a will, on two grounds more especially: 1st, that he was time-serving and conventional in opinion, and, 2nd, that he was prosy and dull in writing. That these views, as entertained by Shelley, were accompanied by and consistent with a very intense admiration of Wordsworth and his poetry on certain other grounds, will of course remain none the less true. A letter to Mr. Peacock dated 25 July 1818 (*Fraser's Magazine*, March 1860) puts the point very plainly. "I wish you had sent me some of the overflowing villany of those apostates. What a beastly and pitiful wretch that Wordsworth! That such a man should be such a poet! I can compare him with no other but Simonides, that flatterer of the Sicilian tyrants, and at the same time the most natural and tender of lyric poets."

Shelley sent *Peter Bell the Third* to Leigh Hunt on 2 Nov. 1819, for publication by Ollier: it was never published, however, till after the author's death. Shelley says in writing to Mr. Ollier, 15 Dec. 1819: "I think *Peter* not bad in his way; but perhaps no one will believe in anything in the shape of a joke from me." And to Hunt: "The author is to be kept a secret. . . My motive in this is solely not to prejudge myself in the present moment; as I have only expended a few days in this party-squib, and of course taken little pains. The verses and language I have let come as they would, and I am about to publish more serious things this winter: afterwards (that is next year, if the thing should be remembered so long) I have no objection to the author being known, but *not now*."

P. 261.

The Masque of Anarchy: written on the Occasion of the Massacre at Manchester.

The second clause of the title comes from the MS. of this poem first used by Mr. Forman: the MS. is done by Mrs. Shelley, with revisions by Shelley

¹ This fact, and the extract which follows, are given in Mr. Garnett's *Relics of Shelley*. In the *Essays, Letters, &c.* (vol. ii. p. 206) there is a different letter to Hunt dated Nov. 1819, enclosing "a piece for the *Examiner*," and a note alleges that this piece was *Peter Bell the Third*. But that must be a mistake.

himself. Several other alterations of the hitherto printed texts are adopted by me from the same MS. as printed by Mr. Forman : I need not indicate them one by one.

P. 261.

"Like Eldon, an ermined gown."

Shelley cancelled the word "Lord" (preceding Eldon), which is printed in editions earlier than Mr. Forman's. For the metre's sake, I should like to read "Eldon-like."

P. 263.

"For he knew the palaces
Of our kings were *nightly* his."

"Nightly" is in all the editions, and in the MS. Yet I can hardly think B.V. is other than correct in proposing to read "rightly."

P. 268.

Stanza 1.

This stanza does not appear in the MS. nor in the original edition—that of Leigh Hunt, 1832. Mrs. Shelley inserted it; and, as one cannot at all doubt its being Shelley's, she must, I think, have had some sufficient authority, and I retain the stanza.

P. 270.

"They make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
Such they curse their Maker not."

Here again I retain the reading of the last line which appears in Mrs. Shelley's editions, instead of—

"So serene they curse it not."

This last-quoted line seems to me decidedly weak, and hardly self-consistent in its terms: the other line, if rather awkward in diction, is at least sound in sense, and can only, I think, have been set aside to humour the susceptibilities of some person other than Shelley himself.

P. 271.

"Declare with *measured* words."

So in the MS., and in Hunt's edition. Mrs. Shelley substituted "ne'er said" for "measured." That hardly looks like a mere inadvertence, but I adhere to the MS.

P. 276.

"— Choose Reform or Civil War."

The — is Shelley's own. On p. 280, in the speech of Pyrganax, we find it replaced by "Bœotia": but I have no doubt that Shelley means the reader *here* to pitch upon the right word for himself, and that word would be "Britannia." The succeeding phrase, "through thy streets," is altered in the speech of Pyrganax (previous editions) to "through *the* streets": but I think Mr. Forman must be right in regarding this as an oversight, and there restoring "thy," and I have followed him.

P. 276.

"*Charité*."

"*Charité*" refers probably to the Princess Charlotte—as Mr. Swinburne suggests to me.

P. 279.

"Moses the sow-gelder, and Zephaniah
The hog-butcher."

I follow Mr. Forman in transferring to the beginning of a new line the word "The hog-butcher."

P. 280.

Pyrganax.

This name has hitherto been spelled "*Pyrganax*." The personage is meant for Lord Castlereagh (so Medwin affirms, and the reader will not fail to see it for himself). Now it is clear that *Pyrganax* is a Greek compound—Πύργος, castle, and ἀναξ, king = Castle-reagh; so *Pyrganax* is the proper spelling. (Not that I mean to affirm that Castlereagh does veritably mean "Castle of the kings"; I am informed that it may *possibly* mean that, but more probably "Grey Castle." Shelley presumably knew as little Irish as I do.) The phrase which occurs in the first speech of *Pyrganax*, "The boldest turn their backs upon themselves," was a *de facto* utterance of Lord Castlereagh.

P. 281.

"'Tis the same thing. If you *but* knew as much."

I have taken the liberty of inserting "*but*." Some such word is obviously needed for the metre.

P. 282.

"But if

This Gadfly should drive Iona *hither*?"

Here is another defective line. Perhaps the insertion of a "*but*" (after "should") would again be the readiest emendation to make. Or we might read, "This Gadfly of yours."

P. 283.

"Disinherited

My eldest son Chrysaor," &c.

The reader will perceive here an allusion to the paper-money discussions of the time in England. Shelley was very gravely impressed with a conviction of impending bankruptcy in this country; his published letters to Mr. Gisborne contain recommendations to that gentleman to withdraw his investments in the British funds.

P. 283.

"And then my little grandchildren, the Gibbets."

This about the Gibbets is a ludicrous anachronism on Shelley's part. We hear of a "new-married" couple, whose wedding is notified as a novelty, already the parents of various children old enough to "read a select chapter in the bible" &c.

P. 283.

Enter Gadfly, *followed by Leech and Rat*.

I have added the words in italics; for soon afterwards we find the Leech and Rat saying their say, without (in previous editions) any prior notification of their presence.

P. 285.

"Adiposa."

There would be no difficulty in naming the titled lady indicated by this pseudonym. But perhaps that scandal may now be allowed to sleep: poor Adiposa has been a skeleton this long while.

P. 286.

"A jury of the Pigs. Pack them then."

Again an unmetrical line. "Go pack them then" would be a not very daring emendation.

P. 286.

"Between the ears of the old ones . . ."

I have introduced the . . . The sentence is, to say the least of it, clearly not complete.

P. 286.

"This plan might be tried too ;—Where's General
Laoctonos? It is my royal pleasure."

Hitherto "Laoctonos" has been printed as belonging to the first of these two lines : thus the first was grossly lengthened out, and the second docked.

P. 286.

Dakry.

This personage (with the name which means "a Tear") is obviously intended for Lord Chancellor Eldon ; whose facility of weeping is again glanced at in the *Masque of Anarchy* and in the lines *To the Lord Chancellor*, and with the same simile of millstones, which is taken from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* : "Queen Hecuba laughed that her eyes ran o'er.—With millstones."

P. 290.

"Sausages, bristles, and blood-puddings."

This line defies metre ; an easy modification would be

"Bristles, and sausages, and blood-puddings."

P. 290.

"Who by their frequent squeaks have dared impugn."

I have felt warranted in adopting the word "their," suggested (but not inserted) by Mr. Forman.

P. 293.

"His heart is seen to beat through his waistcoat."

No doubt Shelley took this amusing stage-direction from a similar one in the *Nightmare Abbey* of his friend Peacock—"His heart is seen to beat through his upper benjamin."

P. 302.

"The world will take more interest in his slightest word *than from* the waters of Lethe."

There is evidently something defective here : probably it should be "than *flows from*" ; or the omission may arise from laxity of language consequent upon laxity of thought.

P. 303.

"Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere."

This is the reading of the original edition (1820) : the collected editions give—

"And the Spirit of Love fell everywhere."

P. 305.

"Received more than all ; *it loved more than ever,*
Where none wanted but it, ould belong to the giver

This stanza of the *Sensitive Plant* is by no means unambiguous to me in structure and meaning : the only change I have ventured to introduce into it is the above semicolon, in lieu of a comma. The words italicized, if strictly construed, might mean—"Of that [viz. : beauty] wherein none was wanting save

itself, the Sensitive Plant had a love greater than any flower possessing beauty could impart or gratify : it loved more [beauty] than ever could belong to the giver." Or the best paraphrase may be that given by Mr. Swinburne : The Sensitive Plant "felt more love than the flower which gave it gifts of light and odour could feel, having nothing to give back, as the others had, in return ; all the more thankful and loving for the very barrenness, and impotence of requital, which made the gift a charity instead of an exchange." B. V. suggests to me a somewhat different interpretation ; less close to the diction, but perhaps more close to the thought of Shelley. He says : "The 'giver' seems to me to refer to the 'give' in the first line of the stanza, as well as to the 'it loved' in the third ; and therefore to mean the Sensitive Plant itself. It loved more than ever could belong to itself—brightness, radiance, odour, with which all the other flowers were endowed. 'It loves even like Love' : the allusion being to the *Banquet* of Plato, in which Socrates makes Agathon confess that Love wants, and does not possess, beauty."

P. 306.

"And *delight*, though less bright, was far more deep."

Mr. J. H. Dixon has represented in *Notes and Queries* (3rd Ser., vol. II., and 4th Ser., vol. I.) that "delight" is a misreading for "the light." He adds : "A literary gentleman who was an intimate friend of the poet . . . assured me that Shelley, in his MS., often used the small Greek ϑ for *th*. Let any one write the words 'the light' after such a fashion, and it will be seen how easily an unlearned printer might mistake a ϑ for a *d*, and so print 'delight' instead of 'the light.'" This is reasonable, so far as it goes (if the premises as to the ϑ are admitted). But Mr. Garnett (about the best living authority as to Shelley's MSS.) assures me that he never observed in them any such use of the ϑ ; Mr. Trelawny says the like ; and my own limited experience is wholly to the same effect.

P. 308.

"Told, whilst the *morn* kissed the sleep from her eyes."

In the original edition, the word is "*morn*" ; but the reference to "daylight" in the succeeding stanza seems to prove that "*morn*" is the right reading.

P. 311.

"Which at first was *lovely* as if in sleep."

Here again "*lovely*"—instead of "*lively*," as in the original edition—appears to be correct.

P. 312.

"Stretched out *its* long and hollow shank."

"*Its*" seems to be intended by Shelley to apply to the hemlock only ; although, in a strict construction, it would apply, most ungrammatically, to *all* the plants mentioned in this sentence.

P. 313.

Stanza xvii.

This Stanza was omitted in the collected editions ; perhaps merely because of its repulsiveness, though there *may* have been the poet's own authority for cancelling it. The word "*moss*" seems to me hardly right ; for the objects really spoken of appear to be the tent-shaped tops of the agarics and fungi, commonly termed "*caps*" ; possibly Shelley wrote "*caps*," and the printer misread it "*moss*." In l. 2, "*stuck*" is surmised by B. V. to be a misprint for "*stunk*," which appears apposite to l. 4. "*inverting* the winds."

P. 317.

"Which in those hearts which *must* remember me."

Mr. Garnett (*Relics of Shelley*) gives, on MS. authority, this "*must*" instead of "*most*." He also supplies three other important emendations in this same *Letter to Maria Gisborne*:

P. 319.—"With *lead* [*leaf*] in the middle."P. 322.—"While Rebuke *awaits* [*stands*] pale and dumb."Ditto.—"Which, with its own internal *lightning* [*lustre*] blind."

Several other emendations, including a missing line, are furnished by Mr. Forman's edition, and are here reproduced.

P. 318.

"With thumb-screws, wheels with tooth and spikes and jag,
Which fishers found under the the utmost crag
Of Cornwall," &c.

The above-printed "which" has been "with" in all editions since the first. Besides this, in *all* the editions the punctuation brings to a pause the sentence before "with thumb-screws." Any reader who has heretofore understood the whole passage beginning—

"Or those in *philanthropic* council met,"

and ending "as panthers sleep," can only have done so by wholly disregarding the punctuation. Properly printed, the passage is seen to refer to the torture-engines (or *supposed* torture-engines) sent over with the Spanish Armada, and wrecked off the Cornish coast. The epithet "*philosophic*" had hitherto been substituted for "*philanthropic*," which latter is proved, by the original MS., to be correct.

P. 318.

"Henry will know

The thing I mean."

"Henry" is Mr. Henry Reveley, son of Mrs. Gisborne by her first marriage, the engineer mentioned in Mrs. Shelley's note, vol. iii. p. 87.

P. 321.

"When we shall be as we no longer are."

A more obvious expression would be "When we shall be *no* longer as we are." But I think Shelley means: "When we shall be *again* such as we were in our antenatal state—free disembodied spirits."

P. 322.

"You will see Coleridge; *he* who sits obscure."

This "*he*" should of course, in strict grammar, be "*him*." But it is *only* one out of many instances of a like laxity—*so* clearly *symptomatic* in Shelley that I have not felt called upon to make any alteration.

P. 322.

"He is a pearl within an oyster-shell."

This line remains rhymeless; there seems little ground for surmising either misprint, or the loss of a succeeding line.

P. 322.

"And there

Is English Peacock " &c.

These lines have hitherto *stood* punctuated thus:

"And there

Is English P—— with his mountain Fair

Turned into a Flamingo,—that shy bird
That gleams i' the Indian air."

This would indicate that *Mrs.* Peacock (the "mountain fair") is turned into a flamingo. But the allusion to the flamingo's shyness, and to the disappearance of married men from their old haunts, shows that the shy flamingo is Peacock himself—a play on the bird-like surname. The reference to India also applies to Peacock, who was in the East India House. I have modified the punctuation to correspond.

P. 326.

"To thy fair feet a winged Vision came" &c.

These lines must no doubt refer to the *Revolt of Islam*, dedicated to Mary Shelley. "And that is dead" is not a minutely accurate account of its fate.

P. 328.

"Since in that cave a dewy splendour hidden
Took shape and motion."

B. V. suggests that "since" ought to be "when." This seems to be correct, as the main statement is that the Witch was born after ten renewals of the moon. But I presume Shelley (rather confusedly) meant that the moon had been renewed ten times *since* the Witch was conceived, and then finally she was born.

P. 330.

"Dog-headed, *bosom-eyed*, and bird-footed."

The idea of a woman with eyes instead of nipples to her breasts had taken strong hold of Shelley: see the Memoir, p. 65.

P. 332.

"The living were not *envied* of the dead."

B. V. queries whether "*envious*" would not be the right word. I decidedly think it would, and have been greatly inclined to alter the text accordingly.

P. 334.

"Belongs to each and all who gaze *thereon*."

In previous editions, the word is "upon," instead of "thereon." Syntax and sense are left in a glaringly incomplete state with "upon"; and, as I cannot suppose that Shelley would deliberately have retained it, I have hazarded the emendation in the text, with some compunctious visitings.

P. 338.

"Now lingering on the pools, in which abode
The calm and darkness of the deep content
In which they paused."

I follow, with much uncertainty, the first edition; later editions put a comma after "deep," and thereby alter the sense observably. The diction also becomes thus, though intelligible, a little awkward.

P. 339.

"The water flashed,—like sunlight, by the prow
Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to heaven."

The meaning of this is not altogether perspicuous. I rather suppose that we are to understand it thus: "The water, cloven by the prow of the boat, flashed in the sun; and, thus flashing, it looked as if it had been sunlight flung up to heaven by the prow of the boat, which, in brightness and swiftness, might have been taken for a meteor seen at noon." I have slightly modified the punc-

tuation, to bring out this sense. If this is not right, I presume we ought to read—

“The water flashed, like sunlight, by the prow,—
Or a noon-wandering meteor flung to heaven.”

P. 339.

“The fabulous Thamondocana.”

Ptolemy, in his Geography, mentions this city: it is now supposed not to be “fabulous,” but the same as Timbuctoo—which the French traveller Caillé, the first European who visited it, ascertained to be in nearly the same latitude and longitude indicated by Ptolemy. (Mr. Garnett supplies me with these particulars.)

P. 350.

Epipsychidion.

Shelley forwarded this poem to Ollier on 16 February 1821 for publication, saying: “The longer poem I desire should not be considered as my own: indeed, in a certain sense, it is a production of a portion of me already dead—and, in this sense, the ‘advertisement’ is no fiction. It is to be published simply for the esoteric few; and I make its author a secret, to avoid the malignity of those who turn sweet food into poison, transforming all they touch into the corruption of their own natures. My wish with respect to it is that it should be printed immediately in the simplest form, and merely one-hundred copies. Those who are capable of judging and feeling rightly with respect to a composition of so abstruse a nature certainly do not arrive at that number—among those, at least, who would ever be excited to read an obscure and anonymous production: and it would give me no pleasure that the vulgar should read it. If you have any bookselling reason against publishing so small a number as a hundred, merely distribute copies among those to whom you think the poetry would afford any pleasure.” In October of the same year the poet wrote to Mr. Gisborne: “The *Epipsychidion* is a mystery. As to real flesh and blood, you know that I do not deal in those articles: you might as well go to a gin-shop for a leg of mutton as expect anything human or earthly from me. I desired Ollier not to circulate this piece except to the *συγγοί*: and even they, it seems, are inclined to approximate me to the circle of a servant-girl and her sweetheart. But I intend to write a *Symposium* of my own, to set all this right.”² The *συγγοί* would have comprised, or consisted solely of, Hunt, Godwin, Hogg, Peacock, Keats, Moore, Horatio Smith, and Byron; who are named in a letter of Shelley’s dated 6 September 1819 (*Shelley Memorials*, p. 120) as those who are to receive whatever he publishes.—The word *Epipsychidion* may be understood as meaning “a poem on the soul.”

P. 350.

“Emilia Viviani, now imprisoned in the Convent of St. Anne, Pisa.”

In the original edition of *Epipsychidion*, and all others till now, the initial “V—” has alone appeared (so also “E. V.” in the poem in vol. iii. p. 91), and “the Convent of —.” The following account of the lady in question is given by Lady Shelley in the *Shelley Memorials*, being condensed from Medwin’s details. “The noble and unfortunate Lady Emilia V—” was the daughter of an Italian Count, and was shut up in a convent by her father until such time as he could find for her a husband of whom he approved. In this dreary prison [after she had been there about four years] Shelley saw her; and was struck by her amazing beauty, by the highly cultivated grace of her mind, and by the misery which she suffered in being debarred from all sympathy. She was subsequently married to a gentleman chosen for her by her father; and, after pining in his society, and in the marshy solitudes of the Maremma, for six years, she left him, with the consent of her parent—and died of con-

¹ *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 152, 153.

² *Shelley Memorials*, p. 154.

sumption in a dilapidated old mansion at Florence. This occurred long after the death of Shelley, who used frequently to visit her while she was living in the convent, and to do his utmost to ameliorate her wretched condition."—I have lately (1877) been informed, on what ought to be good authority, that Medwin's account is not correct; as Emilia lived longer than he supposed, and took some position in the court of the Duchess of Parma.

P. 350.

"*L'anima amante*" &c.

Translated for the benefit of those who are not Italian readers. "The loving soul launches beyond creation; and creates for itself in the infinite a world all its own, far different from this obscure and terrifying gulf." The sentence here cited is only a portion of an outpouring of some little length, given in Medwin's *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii.

P. 350.

"*Gran vergogna*" &c.

A quotation from Dante, signifying: "Great were his shame who should rhyme anything under a garb of metaphor or rhetorical colour, and then, being asked, should be incapable of stripping his words of this garb so that they might have a veritable meaning." The words coming soon afterwards—"The stanza on the *opposite* page"—are applicable to the original edition, not to ours. The stanza is not quite so "literal" a translation as perhaps Shelley supposed, for it misses the real point of Dante's conclusion.

P. 351.

"Sweet Spirit, sister of that orphan one
Whose empire is the name thou weepest on."

This couplet has often been cited as unintelligible. Mr. Garnett (*Relics of Shelley*, p. 97) propounds as an explanation: "The 'orphan one,' Emilia's spiritual sister, is Mary Shelley, whose mother died in giving her birth: the 'name' is Shelley's own." Emilia was wont to address Mary as "sister." A writer in the *Times* (21st January 1871) considers that the "orphan one" is Shelley himself—"orphan" in the sense of being bereaved or stinted of something necessary to the fullness of his being, *i.e.*, a "sister" spirit such as Emilia. This writer does not explain the phrase about the "name"; but I suppose he also regards it as Shelley's own name, which would thus be spoken of as his sole possession—the only thing he can claim as his. We may fairly, however, rest upon Mr. Garnett's authority.

P. 353.

"The crimson pulse of living Morn may quiver."

A horrid violation of grammar is given in previous editions—

"The crimson pulse of living morning quiver."

The words "morn may" might easily be misread and misprinted as "morning." I trust therefore that the reader will tolerate this emendation.

P. 354.

"We—are we not formed as notes of music are," &c.

It seems to me that the opening "We" in this line ought to be cancelled.

P. 360.

"Where it may ripen to a brighter bloom!"

This long sentence (which begins with the opening of the paragraph) either has no syntactical conclusion, or else (which seems more probable) it slides into the imperative mood with and from the words, "So ye, bright regents." I have therefore thought best to punctuate its ending interjectionally, as above.

P. 363.

"The sky

Peeps through their *winter-woof* of tracery."

This phrase may be fully accounted for by understanding that the season when the flowers fade is the winter, and that then the glinting of the light comes through the tracery of the denuded branches or tendrils. Yet it might be suspected that Shelley wrote "*inter-woof*." "*Inter-woof of tracery*" would be a very natural variation upon the equally natural term "*interwoven tracery*" and words compounded with "*inter*" are continual in Shelley.

P. 366.

"Marina, Vanna, Primus, and the rest."

It is not for me to surmise with any confidence whether or not these names designate particular individuals. The name Marina is continually applied to Mrs. Shelley in the letters of Leigh Hunt and his wife. Vanna is the short of Giovanna, the Italian synonym of Jane, the christian name of Mrs. Williams—a lady whom Shelley was introduced to shortly before the time when he despatched *Epipsychidion* to London. If Vanna means Jane Williams, perhaps "Primus" is her husband.

P. 367.

Adonais; an Elegy on the death of John Keats.

These words of the title are followed, in the original edition, by the words "Author of *Endymion*, *Hyperion*, &c.,"—which have hitherto been reproduced in subsequent issues. I think the time has come to drop them. Keats is as indelibly recorded among the poets as Spenser or Marlow; and we should not deem it necessary to certify the reader that the one was the author of *The Faëry Queen*, and the other of *Doctor Faustus*.

It has been stated before now (as for instance by Captain Medwin in the *Shelley Papers*) that *Adonais* is modelled on Moschus and Bion. Shelley himself, as if to court the remark, gives the poem a motto from Moschus; and it seems to me a plausible suggestion that the name *Adonais* (which may stand for a Doric form of "Adonis," but is not, I believe, to be found in any classic author) was adopted by the poet to recall to mind the *Idyll* of Bion on Adonis. I am not aware, however, that any one has yet pointed out the parallel passages. Mr. G. S. D. Murray, of Christ Church College, Oxford, has noted those from Bion, and very obligingly placed them at my disposal. The principal instances are as follows:

Stanza i. "I weep for Adonais—he is dead!"

Αἰαζω τὸν Ἀδωνιν ἀπώλετο καλὸς Ἀδωνις.

(I lament for Adonis; beautiful Adonis is dead.)

Stanza vii.

"While still

He lies as if in dewy sleep he lay."

Καὶ νέκυς ὦν καλὸς ἐστὶ, καλὸς νέκυς οἷα καθεύδων.

(Even as a corpse he is beautiful, a corpse beautiful as though in sleep.)

Stanzas x., xi. "And fans him with her moonlight wings.

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs, as if embalming them;
Another clipped her profuse locks."

Ἀμφὶ δὲ μιν κλαίοντες ἐπιστενάχουσιν ἱρώτες
κτεράμενοι χαίτας ἐπ' Ἀδωνίδι, ὃς δὲ λήβησι
χρυσείοις φορέησιν ὕδωρ, ὃ δὲ μήρια λοίει,
ὃς δ' ὀπίθεν περὶ γέσσω ἀναψέχει τὸν Ἀδωνιν.

(And round about him the Loves mourn for him weeping, having clipped their locks for Adonis; and one brings water in golden urns, and another washes his limbs, and another from behind fans Adonis with her wings.)

Stanza xxvi. "Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live!

And in my heartless breast and burning brain

That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive;

I would give

All that I am to be as thou now art:—

But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart."

τοσσοῦτόν με φιλασον ὅσον ζῶει τὸ φίλαμα.

. . . φίλαμα δὲ τοῦτο φυλάξω

ὥς αὐτὸν τὸν Ἀδωνιν. . . .

ἀ δὲ τάλαίνα,

ζῶω καὶ θεὸς ἐμὲ καὶ οὐ δύναμαι σε διώκειν.

(Kiss me so far as a kiss lives . . . and I will guard this kiss as 'twere Adonis' self. . . But I unhappy live, and am a goddess, and cannot follow thee.)

See also (vol. iii, p. 294) the translation from Bion's *Elegy on the Death of Adonis*, unknown until printed in Mr. Forman's edition of Shelley, 1877.

P. 367.

Ἀστὴρ ποῖν μὲν ἑλαμπες κ. τ. λ.

The distich by Plato which Shelley here applies to Keats will be found translated by him in vol. iii, p. 292, under the title *To Stella*.

P. 367.

"It is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem a criticism," &c.

This intention was not fulfilled—owing (as stated in a letter of 25th September 1821 from Shelley to Mr. Ollier) to his having mislaid the volume containing *Hyperion*: and in fact there never was a separate London edition. Another generous idea of Shelley's, hardly to be called an intention, was to collect the remnants of Keats's writings, and publish them with a life and criticism. This he mentions in a letter to Mr. Severn dated 29th November 1821: adding at the same time that the idea would not be carried out, as he doubted whether the criticism "would find a single reader." At such a discount in the market were those two glorious poets, Keats and Shelley, about half a year following the death of the former, and preceding that of the latter.

P. 367.

"John Keats died . . . on the [23rd] of [February] 1821."

Shelley gave the date thus, "the — of — 1821." In later editions "the 27th of December 1820" was erroneously substituted. *Adonais* was written about May 1821.

P. 367.

"The savage criticism on his *Endymion* which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind," &c.

Shelley was not alone at the time in supposing this, and it is still a popular tradition among poetic readers: but the evidence supplied by the *Life and Letters of Keats* published by Lord Houghton shows distinctly that the notion was exaggerated—not to say, baseless.

P. 367.

"A most base and unprincipled calumniator."

No doubt Shelley here refers to the writer of the *Quarterly Review* notice of *Laon and Cythna*, whom he (after he became convinced it was not by Southey)—and not he alone—believed to be the Rev. Mr. (late Dean) Milman. It appears elsewhere that he ascribed to the same hand the harsh critique on *Endymion*. I am enabled to state positively that the review of Shelley was not by Milman: according to Medwin, it was affirmed by Hobhouse (Lord Broughton) to be the handiwork of a nephew of Coleridge, *i.e.* the late Judge—and this, I learn, is correct. Most literary enquirers, at the present day, attribute to Gifford the review of Keats.

P. 367.

"Woman . . . Mr. Barret."

Mr. Barret was the author of the poem *Woman*.

P. 368.

"Almost risked his own life," &c.

These words are quoted, but not verbatim, from a letter addressed by Colonel Finch to Mr. Gisborne. See Shelley's *Essays, Letters, &c.*, vol. ii. p. 238.

P. 370.

"The third among the Sons of Light."

It may be questioned whom, as the first and second "Sons of Light," Shelley intended to associate with Milton. If he refers to *English* poets exclusively, Chancer probably and Shakespeare certainly may be proposed. But perhaps he referred more particularly to *epic* poets. In that case, the two are assuredly Homer and Dante. His admirable *Defence of Poetry* says: "Homer was the first and Dante the second epic poet; that is, the second poet the series of whose creations bore a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religion of the age in which he lived, and of the ages which followed it—developing itself in correspondence with their development. . . . Milton was the third epic poet."

P. 371.

"Till darkness and the law

Of change shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw."

In the original *Adonais*, printed in Pisa, this line is different—

"Of mortal change, shall fill the grave which is her maw."

P. 372.

"Quenched its caress upon *his* icy lips."

So in the Pisa edition—and, I think, certainly correct. In subsequent editions, the word is "*its*."

P. 373.

"As if she Autumn were,

Or they dead leaves."

B. V. thinks, and so do I, that the image would be completer and more self-consistent if we read "*And* they dead leaves."

P. 373.

"Amid the *faint companions* of their youth."

In the original edition this stands "the drooping comrades." Such a substitution can only, I presume, have been introduced into the text on Shelley's own authority.

P. 374.

"Like incarnations of the stars, *when* splendour
Is changed to fragrance."

It appears to me that the word "where" or "whose" might be preferred to "when." Perhaps "whose" would be the better of the two.

P. 376.

"They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low."

I incline to prefer the original reading—"spurn them *as they go*": but, as it must be assumed that the alteration is Shelley's own, I have to leave it.

P. 376.

"Their garlands sere, their *magic* mantles rent."

I feel rather sceptical about this word "magic": but it figures in all the editions, and has at least a poetic ring. I suspect it ought to be "tragic": the main idea being that the "shepherds" (poets) were habited in "mantles" corresponding to their respective poetic qualities, like the tragic performers in Grecian drama. See the phrase on p. 147, "the mask and the *mantle* in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world."—The two poets mentioned in this stanza are (need it be said?) Byron and Moore: though whether Moore ever showed the faintest interest in or grief for Keats I know not. The next stanza (xxxi.) introduces Shelley himself; and xxxv., Leigh Hunt.

P. 379.

Stanza xliii.

Shelley termed *Adonais* "the least imperfect of my compositions."¹ Its rhyming, however, is scarcely more accordant to rigid rule than that of the *Revolt of Islam*. In this stanza, for instance, "bear" is made to rhyme with "bear."—Other expressions used by Shelley regarding *Adonais* are—"a highly wrought *piece of art*, and perhaps better, in point of composition, than anything I have written":—"I know what to think of *Adonais*, but what to think of those who confound it with the many bad poems of the day I know not":—"It is absurd in any Review to criticize *Adonais*, and still more absurd to pretend that the verses are bad":—"I am especially curious to hear the fate of *Adonais*; I confess I should be surprised if that poem were born to an immortality of oblivion."

P. 381.

"Here pause. These graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each," &c.

No doubt Shelley is here thinking in especial of his own bitterly mourned infant son William, buried in this ground not two years before.

P. 382.

"Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak."

I follow, with some uncertainty, the punctuation of the original edition. In some others, there is no comma after "words," and then the sense alters into saying that "words are weak to speak the glory transfused by Rome's azure sky," &c.

¹ *Shelley Memorials*, p. 159.

P. 383.

Hellas—Motto.

In a letter to Mr. Peacock dated 21st March 1821 Shelley requested that two seals might be procured for him inscribed with this same motto, and having as device a dove with outspread wings.

P. 383.

"The only goat-song which I have yet attempted."

This will be recognized as an allusion to the tragedy of *The Cenci*.

P. 386.

"The Phantom of Mahomet the Second."

I have inserted this name in the list.

P. 388.

"Florence, Albion, Switzerland."

Among the Shelley documents once the property of the publisher Mr. Charles Ollier sold by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson (see p. 423) was the MS. of *Hellas* (written by a friend, with corrections by Shelley himself), also a letter of Shelley's notifying errata in the printed *Hellas*. One of the items which the poet thus points out is that a new stanza begins after the present line, and continues to the words, "From utmost Germany to Spain."

P. 391.

"Kings are like stars : they rise and set, they have
The worship of the world, but no repose."

An evident paraphrase from Bacon—one of the authors who excited Shelley's highest enthusiasm: "Princes are like to heavenly bodies, which cause good or evil times, and which have much veneration but no rest." (*Essay Of Empire*.) (This passage was recalled to my recollection by Mr. G. S. D. Murray.)

P. 398.

"Thy heart is Greek, Hassan."

The drama of *Hellas* is, for all practical purposes, consistent in using the pronoun "thou" and its congeners throughout, instead of "you"; save in this instance, which, in previous texts, stands "*Your heart*." I think this small change, for the sake of uniformity of diction, not other than legitimate—especially as "thou" and "thy" appear in this very same speech of three and a half lines.

P. 398.

"Death is awake ! *Repulse is* on the waters !

In his list of errata, Shelley gives "*Repulse is*" (instead of "*Repulsed on*") as a correction of special moment.

P. 398.

"The caves of the Icarian isles
Told each to the other."

"Told" (not "hold" as printed prior to my edition of 1870) is in the MS of *Hellas*, and in Shelley's list of errata.

P. 402.

"He stood, he says, upon Chelonites'
Promontory."

Chelonites is the correct word ; there is a promontory so named nearly opposite Cephallenia. Of "Clelonite's (or Clelonit's) promontory" (as hitherto printed) no one ever heard.

P. 403.

"Bask in the *deep*-blue noon divine."

I am sorry to insert the word "deep," for I prefer the line without it, and so it had always been printed. But the MS. and list of errata leave me no alternative.

P. 406.

"For

Revenge and Wrong bring forth their kind."

"For" has no rhyme (unless "are" and "despair" are to be considered such): it requires to rhyme with "hear." From this defect of rhyme, and other considerations, I (following Mr. Fleay) used to consider it almost certain that "Fear" ought to replace "For"; and I gave "Fear" in my edition of 1870, without (I think) any remonstrance from other Shelleyites. However, the word in the MS. is "For," and Shelley's list of errata leaves this unaltered—so we must needs abide by it.

P. 407.

"Mighty or wise. I apprehended not."

"Apprehended" is the correct word, as in the MS.; hitherto misprinted "apprehend."

P. 407

"Disdain thee?—Not the worm beneath *thy* feet."

"Thy" is in Shelley's own edition. In all subsequent editions, so far as I know, until this of 1877, the word had stood "my."

P. 409.

"The Phantom of Mahomet the Second appears."

I have inserted this stage-direction.

P. 410.

"The weight which Crime, whose wings are plumed with years."

A friend suggested to me to substitute "Time" for "Crime"—and, as I thought, with great plausibility. "Crime," however, is indisputably right. It was so written in the MS.; and Shelley there altered the small c into a capital.

P. 414.

"Now shall the blazon of the cross be *veiled*."

Perhaps, as B. V. suggests to me, "vailed" (lowered) would be the true reading.

P. 417.

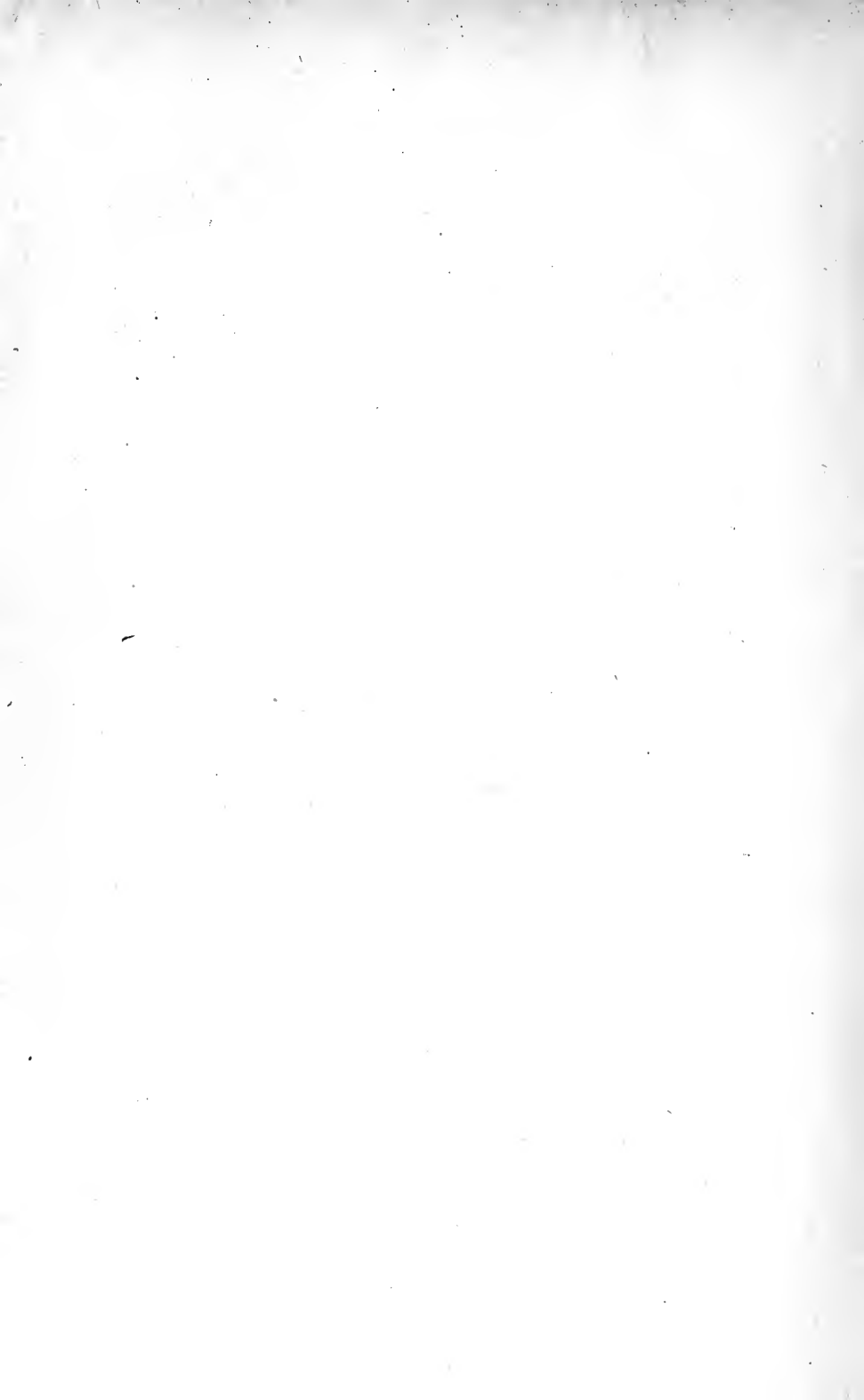
"A Greek who had been Lord Byron's servant."

His name (as notified in Moore's *Life of Byron*) was Demetrius Zografio.

P. 418.

"The taking of Constantinople in 1453."

Hitherto printed "1445": one of the unnumbered loosenesses so characteristic of Shelley. Another may be noticed on p. 417—the term "the Austrian tyrant" applied to Frederick Barbarossa and the emperors of his line.



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